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*with affectionate
best kind regards
THIRTY
from the editor's wife*

SHORT POEMS

BY

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Preface.



MY little book, that dost enfold
The thoughts I sometimes cherish,
And must thou forth into the cold,
And only bloom to perish?
Alas! thou ne'er wilt meet a friend
Like him whose hand thou'rt leaving,
For, to thy numbers, none will lend
An ear, so self-deceiving.

No other eye will seek to see
Thy beauty, not thy failing.
If any do,—perchance 'twill be
A quest of small availing.
Yet if the world should quite neglect,
Too busy far to heed thee,
Bring back to me thy fortunes wrecked,
And I, at least, shall read thee.

I have an attic, far aloft,—
Thy fellows there may slumber.
And them the dust in showers soft
Will coat—with other lumber.
If thou may have no readers,—then
The joy of song's in singing;
And thou wast born afar from men,
Where many charms were springing;

And I was happy while I lay
Where summery fields were gleaming,—
By voiceful stream,—by thunderous bay,—
A-dreaming still and dreaming.
And all the gladness of those days
While thou wast still a-making
A peep between thy leaves will raise,
When I am old and aching.





A Christmas Sunset.

HOW calm, and fair and dream-like,
The twilight fades away !

What hour on earth can seem like

This ling'ring close of day !

I gaze, and one great thrill my heart suffuses

Which, melting at the touch, its mean earth-bondage
looses.

These hills, with tree-tops fringing,

Stand up in solemn black,

Upon the sky impinging,

Where the last fading track

Of daylight ebbs, in colours faint and tender ;
Save where one crimson bar still hints its vanished
splendour.

The sands are dark and hazy,
But on them slowly swing
The ripples long and lazy
Which with susurrance fling
Soft tongues of silver light, the beach ascending,
A restless line of glory, with murmuring unending.

The moon,—a crescent slender,
Is high in heaven ; her light
Floods the long seas with splendour,
And myriad twinkles bright ;
And over all,—earth, sky, and waters heaving,
The peace of God descends, beyond the heart's
believing.

Oh nature,—whispering ever,
To-night most eloquent,
I feel as if thy Giver
Now o'er me kindly bent ;
Though far he fills yon star-transcending distance,
He seems to dwell to-night with my poor soul's existence.

And hark ! the silver singing
Where wreathing wavelets fall.
For lo ! the breeze is springing
And gently ruffles all.
Yet all is peace—a pure ethereal cadence—
And earth is still a dream of sweetness, more than Eden's.

Oh ; touch of God's own essence,
How soon, alas, thou'lt flee.
I scarce shall leave this presence
When thou wilt fade from me.

But oh! that I could, from this tranquil minute,
So fill my soul with peace that nought else could
 come in it.

It fades! Look how it passes!
 The last dim glow is fled.
The hills are gloom-wrought masses,
 And all the sea is dead,
Save where the moon, fresh glory gathering ever,
Bids yonder restless path with newer splendour
 quiver.

Now homeward. All is over,
 And one more twilight's gone.
Oh! could my heart discover
 To what it leads us on.
Does it but lead to gloom like yon horizon?
Or does it lead to light, like that I fed my eyes on?

A Pang Approaching.

THERE'S dear old Mrs. Martin with her big and
handsome son,

You can see them crossing slowly down the street,
His ample stride he slackens to befit her little one.
As he marches, looking downward at his feet.

But she, poor little lady, keeps her brown eyes fixed
on him,

Throwing all their shining love-light on his face :
She could see him miles away, though her sight is
growing dim.

'Tis her heart that hears the music of his pace.

Why, dear old little mother, there are many worthy
sons :

And there have been sons as worthy, age on age.
But, 'twere throwing words away, to match hers with
other ones,

To her, the leading actor on life's stage.

Her first thought in the morning, and her latest
thought at night ;

And well-nigh half of all the thoughts between.
For she lives a sunny dream-life, unrevealed to
mortal sight,

Woven out of what he is, and what has been.

She knows her George will marry ! He'll be happier
so,—no doubt !

How proud she'll be upon his wedding-day !

And to find a girl to suit him, she has kept a sharp
look-out.

But that girl is not yet made of mortal clay.

Now George has not been waiting till his mother
made her choice,

For he seldom takes his evening walks alone.

Full well he knows the secret thrill of one sweet
rippling voice,

And the twilight touch of lips against his own.

Why,—poor old simple lady!—while he's walking
by your side

He is framing gentle words to tell it all.

Though he leaves it till to-morrow,—you're so happy
in your pride,

Yet across your dream the shadows surely fall.

When Life has Faded.

WHAT though I shall not in the skies
In selfish ease enjoy a throne,
And hear far off the myriad moan
Of endless-surging agonies.

These were the dreams that held me first:
But God draws no such savage line.
We all have something of divine ;—
The best but little more than worst.

If life eternal waits for one,
Then life eternal waits for all ;

Not waking at a judgment call ;
But life to loftier life will run.

It would not bring me anxious care,
Though I believed as many think,
That soul and brain together sink,
Resolving to the things they were.

This world is bright. *This* life is sweet.
We have no claim to any other.
If earth shall fold us as a mother,
While unfelt æons o'er us fleet ;

Though we no more grew cognisant
Of time, or of the rolling spheres,
Of man, and all his changing years :
Unmoved by wish, untouched by want :

Our thanks were due—our praise indeed—
To Him who gave us life and light,
That to a busy day, a night
Of restful darkness should succeed.

Yes ; that were well ! And yet I feel
That somewhere in Creation's plan
A place has been reserved where man
Shall know what sense could not reveal.

A place where these probation years,
That seem to have a future goal,
That never ripen quite the soul,
Will open out in wider spheres.

I am content howe'er it be,
Whether the soul in Paradise

Or in the void that silent lies,
Shall find its rest ; 'tis rest for me.

But yet our human race will last,
And earnest work with hand or brain
Will lift it to a higher plane,
And work will stand when we have passed.

And so the simple rule is best,
To think not of our future place,
But write our mark upon the race,
And leave to God, in trust, the rest.

The Birth of Nature.

I.

In the beginning

THAT space where planets course
In their magnificently silent force,—

That space which spreads afar
Beyond the confines of the loneliest star,—
That space, ineffably sublime, which runs
Through mighty voids, from suns to endless suns,
In the beginning lay in awful sleep ;

Wherein, of all these now bedazzling ones,
There was no shape. But in a formless heap,
Through which no thing that is did stir or creep,
The universe lay spread from deep to mighty deep.

II.

Was chaos.

And darkness without end,
One great mysterious blackness did extend,
With not one ray redeemed,
So that the whole as nothing might have seemed.
For in that wide monotony which spread
Of sullen vapours, chill, inert, and dead,
There was no shape, nor sound, nor any motion,
Nor bound, nor limit through the æons dread ;
Nor change that might discern place, part, or
portion.
A lightning speed had yielded but the notion
Of universal rest in that abysmal ocean.

III.

Whereof composed.

Yet small, and wondrous small,
The atoms of that vapour spread through all.

A floating dust, a speck,
Those pollen grains, which thighs of insects
deck,
Were mighty worlds compared with one of
these ;

But they were scattered in infinities.

Eternity itself would fail to tell

The sum of their stupendous companies.

And though the vapour-mass at rest did dwell,

An ocean dead, without or wave or swell,

Yet did each atom range in paths invisible.

IV.

Its primal energy.

Their speed was as the rush
Of meteor flash through midnight's solemn hush.
And in that infinite maze,
With clash and impact endless, each its ways

Devious, disturbed, and ever broken found
In infinite play of shock and sharp rebound.
Yet each of them, with life and strength in it,
Circled in mighty cycles, and around
One wavering centre was constrained to flit
In orbits winding, varying, intricate ;
Yet ever circling on through changes infinite.

V.

Thus awful whirlpools rolled
Of atoms in their myriad hosts untold ;
Through wildernesses black,
'Mid all-extending silence. But their track
Through countless ages gathered fixity,
And inward drawn by long and slow degree,
Sucked to the centres of their spheres immense,
Those atoms sped no longer singly free,

But bound in ties of mutual influence,
In drops as of the finest quintessence,
They whirled in vapour clouds that ever grew more
dense.

VI.

The cosmic whirlpools.

And all creation saw
These mighty gulfs awhirl to one great law
While fabulous ages crept,
Unbroken darkness on their motion slept.
But, drop on drop impinging, the quick play
Of atoms made a dawning glimmer gray.
It gleamed like silent lightning, like the glow
On thunder clouds which, piling far away,
Flashing, light up their rounded bosoms; so
Electric streams at times lit up the flow
Of tawny vapour clouds that ever round did go.

VII.

A nucleus.

This mighty vortex sphere
Drew inward ever, to the centre near,—
That centre wherein lay
A refuge-spot from such stupendous play.
There nestled calmness 'mid that wild unrest :
A haven of stillness, deep within the breast
Of gloom, and through the nameless ages there
A nucleus orb was gathered and compressed.
Half liquid, but with no discernment where
It melted outward in the vaporous air.
Yet moved it round upon its axis spinning fair.

VIII.

Formerly our orb—the Sun.

And inward still it drew
The circumambient vapours, and it grew

Hot with impingent blow ;
A molten mass of dimly ruddy glow,
And ever as the ages rolled along
More huge its bulk, its fiery glow more strong.
And swifter grew its spinning, for there fell
Oblique upon its bosom all the throng
Of universal matter. Thus did swell
Our glorious orb, the Sun ; and visible
With that transcendent glow all things in light did
dwell.

IX.

A sea of molten glass,—
Translucent fire seemed then that whirling
mass.
At every impulse new
Fresh speed he gathered, and fresh heat he
threw ;

Till urged to fury pace his surface boiled,
And round his girth a mighty ridge was coiled.
Was never sight like that red mountain vast ;
As far beyond earth's ranges highest piled
As plough-built furrows are by these surpassed.
And, as it thundered on, its furnace blast
A hundred million miles with fervent power was cast.

X.

Flameth the solar ridge.

Ah ! what can mortals know
Of mighty scenes? In wondering awe we go
Through gorge and dark ravine,—
O'er peak and height of our own mountains mean.
Oh ! had there been ;—oh ! had there been
some sight
That might have viewed those vales of ruddy
light

Within whose hollow this great earth could lie
Like dusky boulder in a sandy bight !
Some eye to view those liquid mountains high
As seems the moon in our terrestrial sky,
What awful grandeur then must have appalled that
eye !

XI.

Springeth forth Neptune.

But who that lives would dare
The wonders of that moment to declare,
When, hurled with Titan force,
A molten mount was thrown ? It took its course
Through realms of space, like stone by slinger
slung ;
Huge as an hundred worlds, rushing, it sprung :
And many a week it sped, and years were gone,
Until upon the outer verge it hung,

Circling its silent orbit. There it shone
Of all the planets first ; vast and alone
In its majestic course it rolled for ages on.

XII.

The Earth speedeth out into space.

But as the centre, fed
With matter that from out the vast was shed,
Grew large again, and burned
In flaming mounds that heaved and tossed and
turned,
So did its awful speed from age to age
Spin out these mighty drops. Our heritage,
This goodly Earth, sprang liquid from the side
Of the all-parent sun. With belching rage
Outward she leapt, heading towards the wide,
The chill abyss ; and round her rolled a tide
Of vapours, hissing hot, wherein her glow did hide.

XIII.

And yet obliquely sent
She felt an inward influence, and she bent,
Nodding the while, and round
Her parent orb a spiral path she wound.
And centuries rolled by, while still she spread
Outward her giant circles, and she led
Ten thousand leagues of vapour in a trail
That whirled in mighty quivers as she sped;
In shape a sickle, like the glittering tail
Of comets dire, whereat the faces pale
Of desert tribes and those that set the lonely sail.

XIV.

The Moon hath birth.

So sprang our mother earth!
Nor living eye beheld the awful birth.
Her spiral path she traced

Till forces poised. Then, in the cosmic waste,
She found her ultimate path, whereon she
rolled,

Measuring her orbit out a myriad-fold;—

A molten globe of like translucent sheen

As glows in crucibles of liquid gold.

Oh! what a wondrous thing this world hath
been!

And when she tossed the moon to roll between,
There is no thought can frame the thunders of the
scene.

XV.

The Earth cooling.

Ah me! to think, to dream

What ages passed in uneventful stream!

While earth her daily spin,

The moon her monthly circuit made, and in

Twelve moons they two, with awful tread, the
year
Marked out unconscious. As they rolled, each
sphere
Scattered its heat. The earth grew cool, and
made
A solid skin of wrinkled rocks and sere.
Yet such the fervent powers that inward played,
A thousand times they burst the bondage laid,
And fiery lava streams through horrid prospects
strayed.

XVI.

The rain falleth.

A million lives of men
Were all too brief a time to measure when
At last a solid floor,
Too thick, too rigid to be shattered more,

Compassed the earth ; yet hot as lava flow
That hath devoured whole villages below
Not two days past ; so scorching hot it lay.

And when at length there fell, all soft and
slow,

The gentle rains from out the bosom gray
Of that o'er-shadowing cloud, they hissed away
In wreathing steam again ; no drop on it might stay.

XVII.

And far spread the seas.

But still it cooled, while years
Rolled by in mighty cycles ; then these tears
Refreshed its parched face,

And in the hollows found a resting place.

Thus, ever gathering, did the deluge pour

In age-long showers with deep and sullen
roar,

Till, all in shining waters clothed, the world
Was one ensphering ocean. Evermore
Her shallow seas grew deep ; their faces curled
To winds that from the firmament were hurled,
And a great tide around her mighty waist was
whirled.

XVIII.

So did she spin, and day,
Alternate with a brooding darkness, lay
Upon her billowy breast.
And round her whole circumference the crest
Of waves that met no obstacle rolled on.
But tepid all, and through the waters shone
At times the fires internal, when the shell
By rents was torn. Ah ! then, from zone to zone,
Then fierce convulsions raged, and terrible

The thunderous shocks when that deep molten
hell
Received the brimming waves that down its caverns
fell.

XIX.

And up, a hundred leagues,
There flew exploded masses, like the peaks
In size of Caucasus;
And thence again, a covering vaporous
Floated around the world, to lie and brood
In awful twilight on the heaving flood.
And sounds portentous, bellowing loud and deep,
Scattered and burst beneath the dusky shroud,
Then rumbling died, and left the unmeasured sleep
Of ages to enfold the watery heap,
Wherein no sound was heard but the lone billows'
leap.

XX.

Then riseth the dry land.

In many a conflict dread
The sea in parts revealed its rocky bed.

And dry land—ah! how old,
Wrinkled, and bare, and black—raised up its bold
And horrid peaks to stem the onward course
Of rushing waves; but these, with liquid force,
Hurled on the shores the wrecks of earthquake-
 shock,

And dashed them headlong in their thunders
 hoarse ;

Till many a cliff was crumbled, many a rock
To sands resolved, for there was nought could mock
The sea's persistent roll, or its long labours baulk.

XXI.

The toiling waters laid
Deep on their floors the havoc that they made.

And a soft fringe was wrought
To beetling cliffs,—those beaches, where the
 hot
And steaming billows crashed, and made a roar
Roll up reverberant from shore to shore.
Still from the vaporous firmament the rains
 Descended, and the rocky dry land bore
Terrific torrents, earth's magnificent veins,
Sweeping with turbulent whiteness o'er the plains
Of blackened lava, through grim desolation's reigns.

XXII.

The wrecks of time.

In the vast cycles slow,
Of years unnumbered did those torrents flow,
 Of waters mightier far
Than broadest-bosomed of the streams that are.

Rolling their boulders down, they fiercely smote
The jutting crags and buttresses ; their note
Thundrous boomed up among those mountains
wild.

But soft in ocean's depths, still, dark, remote,
The wreck they bore of continents was piled ;—
Pebbles, and sand, and clay, with rust defiled,
Till mighty strata rose in ocean's breast enisled.

XXIII.

Build up mighty strata.

Yet not without the shock
They rose, that rent and burst the solid rock,
Dislodging mighty beds,
Casting them up in mountain peaks, whose
heads
Were lost in vapour clouds, which hissing came
Whence combat raged of mingling sea and flame.

Then, soon as peace returned to brood once
more,
Through the long centuries, the wave, the
stream,
Inch upon inch, laid out that sandy floor,
And what the fires threw up the waters wore,
And filled the hollow seas with sediments they bore.

XXIV.

And life appeareth.

Thus came a wondrous change ;
No more the lava rock, the adamant range ;
But softly rounded forms
Of sandstone, modelled by ten thousand storms,
While still in myriads passed the ages ; still
The earth grew cool, the waters cold, until,
Their cataclysmic childhood far outgrown,
To lowly life they first were suitable.

Yet whence it came, and whence its germs were
thrown,

Whether it sprang from inborn powers alone,
Ah ! who will tell of all whose hearts the mystery own !

XXV.

Yet whencesoever sprung
The lowly life that clothed our earth, and clung,
A mould, a film of green,
’Twas wondrous above all the years had seen.
For every cell that floated soft amid
Her sister cells, within her bosom hid
The secret power of progeny ; it grew,
Conceived, and swelled, and cast its tiny bud,
To live the course itself had circled through.
Thus earth grew green ; the genial waters, too,
With living things were thronged that died, yet
sprung anew.

XXVI.

And slowly ascendeth,

But now, more wondrous still,
The change when all the outer earth grew chill.
Its heat dispelled afar
To cosmic regions of the abysmal star.
Then for its warmth it drank the flooding sun,
And daily turned its breast to feel him. None
Of all its lands but sometimes met his rays.

And yet, while earth was nodding, as it spun,
One pole swung inward to the fervid blaze.
The other outward turned its chilly gaze,
And there the nights grew long, with cold and
desolate days.

XXVII.

Through stress of cold.

But slow, with creeping pace,
That polar winter came, and though the race

Of lowly things was doomed,
And myriads perished, yet wherever bloomed
One stouter than his fellows, he was spared
To propagate his kind; yet ever fared
New generations as the last; they died,

But left the heroes of their tribes, who reared
Their slowly changing broods; thus, through the
tide

Of myriad years, with change they change defied;
And, gathering powers, they spread of aspect
multiplied.

XXVIII.

Through stress of heat.

But elsewhere on the earth
New forms of life from sunshine took their birth;
For as its fervour killed
The weaklings, so fresh forms arose and filled

The tropic seas and sweltering lands. The change
Of warmth and moisture, and the endless range
That death and boundless generation brought,
Built up in humble creatures aspect strange.
Then lowly animals subsistence sought
On lowlier plants. Among themselves they fought.
Till land and ocean were with one great struggle
fraught.

XXIX.

The vital conflict

And from that world-wide strife
There sprang the order of ascending life.
Ill fared the weaker kind
That in fresh change fresh refuge failed to find ;
If that the stress of time and strife and place
Pressed slowly harder on its hapless race.
For some were famished ; some for ages fed
The maws of fiercer forms, till from the face

Of earth the few survivors vanishèd.

And many a tribe was numbered with the dead,
While altered types emerged to conquer and to
spread.

XXX.

Breeds new races;

Some clothed their pulpy forms

In shells that bade defiance to the storms

And hungry foes; and some

With thorny spines were circled; some their home

Made in the bosom of the sheltering soil.

A thousand arts, a thousand shields, to foil

The fierce marauders, grew with numberless years.

A thousand arms to pierce, to rend, to spoil,

The victors wielded; wings and eyes and ears

In shapes primeval came as ministers,—

To these, to seize their prey; to those, to shun their
fears.

XXXI.

Which perish;

They grew, they sported, each
After its kind, on land or wave or beach.

They died and left their shells,
Their spikes, their spines, and thorny tentacles
To strew the floors of ocean. Over these
The soft showers fell from turbid gulfs and seas ;
And earth became a sepulchre, its crust
Built up of many a myriad histories,
Though myriads more were crumbled, dust to dust.
Then the great fires infernal boiled and thrust
The relic-sprinkled rocks in ranges lordliest.

XXXII.

Or, in slow degree,

How slow ! how slow it crept !
That upward march of life ; and oft it slept.
For suns arose and set,
And balmy days passed by, or cold or wet ;

And time was meted, long as that unrolled
Unto our days from Pharaoh reigns of old,
And yet too short such epochs were for aught
Of evident change that could by sight be told.
And, as it seemed, each living thing begot
Its perfect image: yet the change was wrought,
Though in the mighty tale ten thousand years were
nought.

XXXIII.

Become transformed

And dry land changed to sea,
And sea to dry land, each in slow degree;
And creatures that erstwhile
Had roved afar,—now prisoned on some isle
Which ever shrank,—hard pressed, with altered
shapes,
Struggled for life on fast submerging capes.

Some, that upon the watery margin fed
Through ages long, their limbs transformed,
perhaps,
To membraned fins, across the billows fled ;
Others, with limbs in feathery lightness spread,
Fluttered from dwindling isles, where soon their race
lay dead.

XXXIV.

And elsewhere seas withdrew,
And slender tribes grew populous anew ;
And mighty lakes were dried
Inch after inch, till all their inmates died,
Save where some hardier form perchance had
grown,
To walk the land and drink the air alone.
Thus did the earth at every age-long swing,
Bidding alternate zone exchange with zone,

Now frozen deep, in heat now sweltering,
With mighty pressure on each living thing,
Bid form on form arise and race from race outspring.

XXXV.

Into earth's adornment.

And earth was clothed sweet
In gracious flowers. Here in the silent heat
The gorgeous chalice spread.
There, from the snowdrift, peeped a modest head;
And forests threw on high their rustling crests,
And folded twilight in their spacious breasts.
The thicket blossomed; meadows deep in grass
Made grateful home for throngs of busy guests.
Here hummed the bee; there did the beetle pass;
And things that flit on wings of veined glass
Sailed through the dreamy air, or poised in cloud-
like mass.

XXXVI.

The age of coal.

The steaming delta plain

Grew dense with broad-leafed jungles, where
the rain

Rolled in from summer seas.

There tree-ferns waved, in height as stately trees :

Their mighty fronds in graceful measure swayed

O'er leagues of gloom their own luxuriance made :

And ever fell their trunks of hairy brown

In wild entanglement and ruin laid,—

A fragrant mould, whence sprang anew the crown

Of star-like fronds up to the sunlight thrown :

And many a thousand years the earth was deeply
strewn.

XXXVII.

Then lithe, and grim, and dark

Prowled, through the waters, the devouring shark :

And in their direful need,
The lone survivors of his ravenous greed
Grew swift and fearful; and the scaly race
Of smooth proportions seemed, and supple grace.
Then came great lizard monsters; and huge frogs,
In size as oxen, bellowed their deep bass
Where giant marsh-plants sprang from ponds and
bogs,
And pines of antique aspect left their logs
To moulder half afloat, through drizzling mists and
fogs.

XXXVIII.

What are all histories told
To that gigantic tale which rolled and rolled
In slow development
While generations came, and bloomed, and went?
How many a million dawns rose sweet and fair?

How many a million days made mild the air?
How many a million twilights dipped to gloom?

And nought to mark them, save that every-
where

Life with ecstatic thrill awoke to bloom

In new-born bliss, then passed into its doom ;

While earth of mighty hosts was mother both and
tomb.

XXXIX.

The mighty stream of life.

Behold yon little hill,
Chambered and galleried with art and skill :

There, in their busy swarms,
The ants are toiling. Lo ! their zealous forms
Wondrously nerved ! How many a thousand
dwell

Beneath that mound in passage, hall, and cell :

Yet is their city one of myriads more.

They perish, and new generations swell
To toil and pass away. So, on the shore,
Unnumbered drops in endless billows pour,—
Yet who may tell how once they built a breaker's
 roar !

XL.

Here, clad in plated scales,
The whip-tongued eater of the ants assails
 Their sandy fortress. Deep
They learn to burrow in their mazy keep.
Longer and sharper grow his scooping claws ;
Ten thousand creatures through his toothless
 jaws
Pass to destruction to provide a meal.
A hundred millions lose their lives because
His body must grow fat ; a common weal

Of beings, wondrous-planned to think and feel,
Are blotted at one swoop for all their busy zeal.

XL1.

Insect-eaters

Fresh multitudes arise
Of novel forms to seize the insect prize,—
To rend, to cut, to tear,
To draw the trembler from its inmost lair.
And tribes as populous as the teeming East
Is populous with men, are born to feast
The shrew, the hedgehog, mole, or porcupine ;
And these, in time, but feed some mightier
beast.
Yonder, through air, there sail in tortuous line
The swan-necked dragons. When these monsters
dine
Whole tribes of lovely things their being must resign.

XLII.

The saurian world.

That mighty lizard brood
Is rampant upon sea, and shore, and wood,
To gorge, and rend, and wreck.
Some flit on giant wings, with arching neck ;
Their strength like crocodiles', like bats' their flight ;
And squeaking things crouch low when high in
sight,
On outstretched clouds they poise. Some on the
tide,
Where sandy shoals reflect a greenish light,
With head raised high on curving stem, abide.
Some through the deep sea-wave in fury ride,
And their huge serried jaws scatter destruction wide.

XLIII.

Thus evermore are born
Sweet things of beauty, to be crushed and torn.

The quivering, nervous thread,
In wondrous knots, in delicate branches spread,
The marvel-working brain, the silky wing,
The meek brown eye, that soft translucent
spring,
Pass in long streams to fill the hungry maw;
Fermenting there, and foully festering,
They change to formless mud. Such is the law
That rules through all. The monster long may
awe
The lesser broods, yet he at length feeds some red
jaw.

XLIV.

The marsupials.

But from the strife there springs
Maternal care,—that first of nobler things.
And a few scanty young,—
From eggs in myriads now no longer sprung,—

Make the full hope of races. Soft, and warm,
And jelly-bright they reach this world of storm.
Then, in her pouch, the mother lays them, where
They nestle at her nipples, gathering form.
Keen-eared, keen-eyed, she sniffs the tell-tale air,
And bounding, bears her brood from every scare,
Till, strong and fleet of foot, emerge her tender
care.

XLV.

Apparently Pity.

Then first arose on earth
The law of pity: for each feeble birth
Deepened a tenderer tone
That echoed first in female hearts alone.
Yet, thence transmitted, found a varying place
In all the heirs of each ascending race.
Yet long the process, for the primal care
Was self-preserving, and the pardoning grace

In hungry might availed alone to spare
The creature's kindred. Death was everywhere
The needful prop of life ; and mercy weak and rare.

XLVI.

The pachyderms.

But still the ages passed ;
Day following day in deep successions vast.
The Spring-time brought its flowers ;
Summer its fruits. Through long-forgotten hours
The Autumn murmured in those far-off days,
And Winter gloomed in snow and fog and haze.
Then on the prairies fled the fleet gazelle,
And cropped the fragrant blooms. In marshy
bays
Of sunny lakes, till the swift evening fell,
The tapirs wallowed ; while innumerable
The hosts of swine-like things thronged the deep
forest dell.

XLVII.

The flesh-eaters.

And ever that mighty dream
Of slipping ages,—that stupendous stream
Of centuries sped, and not
One century but some subtle change was
wrought.
Then came the tiger and the leopard bright.
The manëd lion, at the fall of night,
Lay watching by those moonlit rivers old
To whet with blood his three days' appetite.
He sprang with roars that struck his victim cold.
Alas! the haunch that felt his thunderous hold!
Over its crunching bones the spoiler crouched and
growled.

XLVIII.

The wolf, the jackal kind,
Howled over midnight wastes. The moving wind

— — —

In hush of ages back
Carried the babbling yelp of many a pack.
The otter dived in every lonely place ;
Weasel, and stoat, and ermine, and the race
Of shuffling bears with slow intrusion crept
To force their way upon earth's crowded face.
While many a form primeval failed, and slept
In unredeemed oblivion ; many swept
So that not even the rocks their faint impression
kept.

XLIX.

Through leafy forests crashed
The ponderous-trooping elephant, and splashed
With shrilly notes beside
The reedy marge of some full-volumed tide.
Here the shy camel on the desert housed ;
The llama there on scraggy mountains browsed.

Far on the rolling sea the lubbering whale
Spouted and plunged. Seals in their concourse
roused
The echoing cliffs of rock or iceberg pale,
Or on some shelving beach of slippery shale,
Suckling their clumsy calves, barked to the passing
gale.

L.

Four-handed tribes.

The bright-eyed lemur skips
With soft four-handed movement to the tips
Of rustling branches. Long
His various species through the forests throng.
From him developed slow the monkey tribe,
That sportive world of romp, and jest, and
jibe.
With them came sympathy, the fond caress,
The pitying look, the softly proffered bribe:

And spite of jars, a wealth of tenderness.
Where tropic selvas reared their vast recess
They held the topmost boughs in nations numberless.

LI.

The apes

Then of their various shapes
In tangled forests grew the man-like apes.
Long-armed, from bough to bough
They swung. Lo, underneath that ridgy brow,
The light of cunning from their glances shed!
On leafy stages, where the branches spread,
They reared their hairy youngsters; at the breast
Suckled with loving care, the burrowing head
By tender fingers stroked and soothed and pressed.
Their chattering families spent on arboured nest
Many a long-gone day, and passed to boundless
rest.

LII.

The advent of Man.

And last of all came man,
Who for a time should cope the age-long plan;
Till in the cosmic swell,—
That tide of time and change invisible,—
He pass to rest as other types have passed,
Leaving an imprint in the record vast.
But chief in those new forms of nobler frame,—
His sons, his heirs, sprung from his race, but
 classed,
As he from apes, apart; with prouder name,
Alike in much, in much perchance the same,
Yet of such altered mould as loftier rank may claim.

LIII.

Reason groweth.

Slowly arose the dawn
Of man's primeval reason; yet there shone

Beneath those shaggy brows
Some gleams of that fine spirit that should house
Within his rounded temples. Embryo mind
Bequeathed had been through many a lowlier
kind ;
Through dog and bear, through ape and elephant,
Emerging from the mists of instinct blind.
But reason now, though vague at first and scant,
Gave speech to man, a genius ministrant,
Beneath whose magic spell his race grew dominant.

LIV.

For mind to mind lent force,
Oft as they wove reciprocal discourse.
And each absorbing each,
They grew, and made to grow with mutual
speech.
Thus came the intercourse of wants and fears ;

And thence inventions : clubs and swords
and spears ;

The bow, the feathered arrow ;—lo ! the fire !

The rude canoe ! and thus, with passing years,
Fresh triumph showed the way to fresh desire.

did new needs new artifice inspire,
And every conquest raised his powers to regions
higher.

LV.

And man ascendeth.

In the incessant strife
Of tribe with tribe, for room, for food, for life,
’Twas intellect prevailed.
The brutish dwindled and their kindred failed.
O’er conquered lands the victor roved and taught
The beasts to bow before his cunning thought.
The ox, the horse, the elephant were pressed

To do him service ;—reared, and sold, and
bought,
Slaughtered, or trained, or shorn as pleased him
best.

Nay, man his vanquished fellow-men possessed,
And slavery lent to earth leisure and learned quest.

LVI.

And civilization dawneth.

Behold the Assyrian,
Where those two mighty Eastern rivers run.
Lo ! how his sweltering slaves
Achieve the wonders that his fancy craves !
For mind o'er body triumphs, and he sees
His temples rise, column and sculptured frieze.
And with them science springs, and all the arts
Of peace and warfare grow by slow degrees.
Then spreads the city, and then hum its marts.

The state, combined of interaiding parts,
Gives man a giant's power, and new-found force
exerts.

LVII.

And morality.

All hail, thy genial sway!

Thou fount of comfort—social sympathy!

Sweet nurse that taught the mind,

'The infant heart of man, still unrefined,

Still rough and harsh, to deem more pleasing fair

The courteous word, the kind and gracious air,

'Than strength of thews and terror of advance.

'The city street was thy peculiar care;

And there thou showed'st thy comeliest
countenance.

How much, with helpful word and welcoming
glance,

Didst thou man's intellect both sweeten and enhance!

LVIII.

'Twas thou didst nurture first
Within his soul that sweetly mournful thirst
Which made his bosom yearn
For mystic knowledge. Much he longed to learn
The whence he came, the whereunto he drifted ;
What power it was the mighty hills that lifted ;
What raised the cedar from its feathery seed.

And much he sought to know how earth was
gifted

With murmuring streams, and flowers and clovered
mead,

Yet none the record of the rocks might read ;
And answer came there none responsive to his need.

LIX.

And religion.

Therefore did fancy roll
Her wreathing films of poesy. A soul

Men saw in everything.

The falling stone, the wind, the bubbling spring,

The rustling tree, the softly opening flower,—

Each moved with joyance of its inward power.

The deep stream held its soul, whereby it flowed ;

The mountain top would gleam, or veil, or lower,

As willed the spirit which therein abode ;

And in the sun resplendently there rode

That spirit which their hearts confessed the highest
god.

LX.

They thrilled with awe and wonder,

Hearing the sky speak in its solemn thunder.

They saw its ardent blaze

From out the mud their vital rice crops raise ;

And as their souls were touched to deeper
chords,

They folded hymns of mystery in words,
That made the budding powers of art expand,
Chanting the honours of wide-working lords.
The temple grew beneath their fashioning hand,—
At first a dream, but with achievement grand,
And stately things arose in reverence through the
land.

LXI.

Civilization extendeth eastward,

Then eastward rolled the springs
Of trickling knowledge to those gatherings
Of swarthy men that lay
Where tawny Ganges holds its fervid way.
Whether borne onward with the conqueror's
spear,
Or with the merchant's traffic year by year,
Knowledge through India long was multiplied,

Till Rama reigned,—a crowned philosopher.
Still eastward borne, through populous regions
 wide,
The arts of peace on China poured their tide,
And hordes of barbarous men thereby were dignified.

LXII.

And westward,

And westward, where the Nile
Wins from the desert glare, one strip to smile,
 Thither the conquerors bore
Their nursling science, and great multitudes
 wore
That air of calm and ordered industry
Whence men derive their full supremacy.
Sesostris then, and Rameses, and the proud
 Unknown beneath the pyramids who lie,—
Each in the narrow patch that death allowed,—

Built up their centuries ; then, reluctant, bowed
Their heads to brainless rest and the thick mummy
shroud.

LXIII.

Into Europe.

And Egypt gave to Greece
Those arts which there found manifold increase.
And Greece bequeathed to Rome
The precious charge which thence found
kindliest home
With Arab caliphs and their alchemists,
While a deep gloom on Europe lay, and mists
Of deadening darkness on its lands abode.
Until, restored by priests, or spite of priests,
In Italy, in Spain, in France there glowed
By turns that light whence truth and progress
flowed ;
Then from its English shrine its fullest lustre showed.

LXIV.

And earnest sons of hers,—
Artisans, sailors, poets, philosophers,—
Workers with hand and brain,—
Deepened the souls or raised the lives of men.
And lo! the triumphs human thought hath won
On German soil, where many a worthy son
Of genius spends a life's long years to find
Some thread of truth that may through nature run!
And thou, America! of all thy kind
The youngest, round thy name hast early twined
Great feats that warm our souls, proud victories of
the mind.

LXV.

Man's triumphs.

Behold, in each of these,
What mind hath done! Look on the boisterous
seas!

What floating things they bear,
Breasting the waves, of giant might, yet fair !
The ships are these, wherein, secure, men ride
O'er all the ocean, and its awful tide
They measure careless. And the lands are lined
With iron tracks. Lo ! snow-white yonder glide
The wreathing curves of steam, where swift as
the wind
The locomotives rush, with might confined,
While rattling waggons speed and thunder on behind.

LXVI.

Man's lightning messages
Flash over land and under stormy seas,
And through the ærial wire
Afar he speaks ; and from the furnace fire
He shapes of might or beauty wondrous things.
And hark ! from organ pipe or chorded strings

The notes divine he fashions ! See his thought
Of loveliness, those sweet imaginings
On canvas to the thrill of spirit wrought !
And from his soul of souls the echoes brought
Of deep, abysmal tones from poet-phrases caught !

LXVII.

His glorious future.

Such is the power of art,
When man with man conjoins, and each his part
Bears in some nation's course !
What then shall be the irresistible force
When nations join as one, and all the earth
Holds one republic ? When, in rank, or birth,—
In tongue,—religion,—laws,—no difference lies
To sever worth from world-wide brother worth.
Far as the nomad unit tribes did rise
Welded in nations, so their destinies
Shall upward grow when earth one nation shall comprise

LXVIII.

Then shall the reign begin—
Far, far adown the centuries,—wherein
Man shall with true control
Bridle all Nature's might and his own soul.
Ah! how remote it seems,—that glorious fate,
A world thick-peopled in fraternal state,
With many a giant force to be its slave!

What prodigies shall rise! What cities great
Spread by each river and each land-locked wave!
There shall the millions hive, and toil, and save;
Still build, still breed their kind, still pass into the
grave.

LXIX.

His vanishment.

For, still the tale is death!
Death is the sum of all that history saith.

And death will be the sum
Of days that are, of all the days to come.
The deaths of beings and the deaths of races.
A few, perchance, may leave awhile their traces ;
Yet, in the cosmic epochs, these must pass.
Give Time but time enough and he effaces
Sooner or later all that is or was.
The earth and all the story that it has
Shall be a meteor streak—to gleam—and fade, alas !

LXX.

For earth herself must die !
Though not perchance till man hath lifted high
His powers, and learnt to wrest
Triumphs that now lie dark and all unguessed.
Not till, perchance, his growing skill hath read
Full many a secret that with mystery dread

Now lures our souls. Not till his distant sons
May walk the earth in all things perfected,
Ten times as far beyond our noblest ones
As Shakspeare and our lordliest paragons
Are lifted high above the Patagonians.

LXXI.

The death of the world.

But thou, oh Earth!—but thou
That spreadest thy rich verdure round me now,
Home of hearts warm and bold,
Shalt one day lie inert and grey and cold!
Oh! may that time be long, thou dear abode,
Ere from thy breast the vital warmth hath
flowed!
Methinks those last thin stragglers I behold,—
Heirs of a mighty intellect,—but bowed,
They as their fathers were, in combats old

With deepening chill, while freezing centuries
rolled ;

They hapless, man by man, relax their shivering
hold !

LXXII.

Its ghost.

Then shall the lowliest race
That, spite of chill, on earth may keep its place,
Then shall the forest tree,
The shrub, the flower, the grass fade utterly !
Then only, in some crevice haply hid,
The mossy mould will bloom unvisited !
Last, shall that lingering life fade evermore,
And the great seas, bound in their icy lid,
Display no more their moving might, but hoar,
A snow-clad ocean round a snow-clad shore,
Shall spread one white expanse the wide world o'er
and o'er !

LXXIII.

Oh ! heart of mine be still,
And faint not at the awful spectacle !

Alas ! well might we quail
Before that whirling death, that spectre pale,
That ghost enwrapt in awful cerements white,
Which once with life was pulsing fresh and
bright !

What awful gulfs of ages it shall speed

Around a sun grown faint in withering night !
And shall it turn, without one mind to read
The mystery of the stars ? Must all indeed
Revolve eternally, yet none be there to heed ?

LXXIV.

The abyss of the future.

Shall all these heavenly things
Move on unseen for ever in their rings ?

Shall earth for ever spin
And no one know the lives that passed therein?
Shall all the universe still spread afar,—
Planet on planet, star on boundless star,—
Spheres and attendant spheres, all circling fair,—
Yet none exist to know that such things are?
Surely the universe is not so bare,
So naked, poor, and paltry! Surely there
Some soul doth habit! Else, what riddle strange
it were.

LXXV.

Things visible, yet none
To see them while the infinite ages run!
Things audible, and still
No ear to drink the rich harmonious thrill!
Things fair to reason, and no reason found
To know their fairness in the measureless round!

Things lustrous with a beauty that shall speak,
Star answering star, through space that hath
no bound,
And yet no soul to feel it! Oh! thou weak
Heart that within me honestly would seek
To grasp such thought,—forbear! nor dream such
empty freak!

LXXVI.

The mystery of the universe

Deep underneath the whole
There rests,—there surely rests some conscious
soul,
Whose mystic influence laid
That early train wherewith the world was made.
The Earth, and all her marvels, passing fair!
This beauty sweet, her mantle everywhere!
And all her creatures!—man, her transient guest,

His works and loftiest aims! Enclosed they were
In some deep germinal thought within the breast
Of that eternal power, unknown, unguessed,
Whereon the ordered paths of countless planets rest.

LXXVIII.

Its soul,

In that last faith content,
Oh! heart, repose : though deep entanglement
Enfold thy feeble thought,
Stumbling through regions that it knoweth not.
Though blackness brood on that dread mystery
Of what at first hath been, of what shall be
When time shall sate at last his vast desire ;
Though compassless thou drift upon a sea
Of wide unfathomables, still the fire
Of that faint star shall shine through darkness dire
To steady still thy course which, ignorant else,
would tire.

LXXIX.

That needs must be unknown.

For oh! my heart, I bow
In inexpressible sadness when, as now,
I feel the littleness
Of all I know, of all I faintly guess,
And see the knowledge that extends, how far!
Sweeping through space beyond the utmost star.
Oh! heart, beat low, and school thyself to feel
How very near us lies that fatal bar
Across whose bounds no thought can e'er reveal
Even the things that close around may fill,
Unknown to sense, the great expanse invisible.

LXXX.

And man!

Five various senses we
The gateways of our knowledge take to be.

Alas! They are but one!—

But one in kind the sensuous thrills that run
Through nerves to conscious brain; and oh!
my heart,

Let not this thought from out thy view depart:
How much may be which presses close around,
Yet finds no entrance in at any part!
Which is,—yet gives nor sight, nor touch, nor
sound!

Bethink thee well how near thee may abound
The mustering forms of things no human sense hath
found.

LXXXI.

Alas, how feeble!

Then rest content in awe;
Delight thyself in fathoming law on law!
Drink heartily thy share
Of all that science wins with creeping care,

But sometimes pausing, from the deeps recall
How petty is the sum, how poor, how small !
Speed forth thy thought for one mysterious hour
Through the stupendous gloom enfolding all.
So shall distrust arise of thine own power ;—
No craven fear to make thee quail and cower,
But manly awe that thrills to feel the darkness lower.

LXXXII.

Yet not without his trust.

Yet trust that, though thy sight
Can see it not, a power exists whose might
Hath made and keepeth still
All things that are. Thou Earth, although the
chill
Whiten thy breast, and desolate though thou roll
Down the vast tracts eternal, yet a soul,
Whose silent speech is this great universe,

Hath planned thy course with all-foreseen
control.

That soul shall smite thee with no withering curse ;
But in some cosmic scheme no thought can pierce,
Thine atomy part shalt thou with myriads more
rehearse.

A Spring Morning.

THE Spring's first breath is upon my cheek ;

Its carols are in my ear ;

Its rustling leaves around me speak

The music I've longed to hear.

Those whispers of joy, of gentle peace,

That sweep all care from the heart ;

That bid the throb of the temples cease,

And the restless longings depart.

Now grieve I no more at the common lot,—

How all who live must die ;

The deep, dark, currents of being,—forgot

In the breeze's wakening sigh.

For, sad and troubled, I long had thought
Upon things that will never be known ;
And my brain was weary, my temples hot,
With the feverful weeks that were flown.

Now here, by the wattle bloom silently laid,
Life seems like a rapturous dream ;
And I lazily watch in the tremulous glade
How the sun-showers flicker and gleam.
For the world is gracious and fragrant and bright,
And the open air smells sweet ;
And the trees, in a flutter of fresh delight,
Respond to the thrill of the heat.

Oh ! fair is thy face, Mother Earth, and warm
Are the sunbeams that fall on thy breast !
And why should I shudder to lay my form
In thy kindly embraces to rest ?

For the trees will wave, and the sunbeams fall,

And the grass grow green and high,

And the flowers will bloom, and the sweet
birds call,

When deep in thy bosom I lie.

The Empire of Our Queen.

WHEREVER spreads the rolling day
That round our planet sweeps its way,
On lonely wave or teeming ground,
There will some Englishman be found.

And where an Englishman may be,
On distant soil, on heaving sea,
Where'er an Englishman is seen,
There is the Empire of our Queen.

Not fertile lands, not cities great,
Build up the measure of her state;
It throbs in every British heart
Throughout the earth's remotest part.

For in her name we symbolise
The law-shaped life, the sweet home ties,
Wherein we daily learn to trace
The future promise of our race.

An Orchestral Symphony.

FORTH from the silence grows a tremulous note.

The air with vague suggestiveness is stirred ;—
Confused, yet sweet : delicious, though remote ;

As when far inland murmurings are heard
Of seas that on a shingly beach are thrown ;

Or like the sound when many a mellow bird
Makes distant music by some river-brim,
Waking the day with rich tumultuous hymn,

And trills that fluttering float
Through open casements, soft, subdued, and dim.

And oh ! the sweetness gurgling from each
throat,
To blend in that rich interwoven tone,

Till morning dreamers wake and all its rapture
own !

So swells the rich confusion, interlaced
With brief melodious turns and glad foretaste
Of tunefulness to be,
That from the maze shall swell, bright, flowing, free,
Like Aphrodité from a rhythmic sea.

Hark to the beat of multitudinous wings !
Their fluttering fills the air with gladsome quiver,
Till, at a chord whereto the whole heart springs
In one delicious shiver,
The harmony dissolves with touch profound,
And wanders, on the deftly woven strings,
A world of mazy sound
That stirs within the soul some lion-might
We knew not slumbered there.
Great glimpses pass, and struggling blindly, tear

The breast with thoughts that own no human
name.

Sweet sounds that melt my frame !

How secret is the magic power ye claim !

For in the rich transition of your keys,—

Harmonious mysteries,

Ye mould my inmost being at your ease.

But hush ! a change is near !

Methinks a princess comes !

Those drowsy notes I hear

Are of the throng that hums

Attendant where she moves with cadenced feet.

She enters, and the drums

Roll out their turbulent tones ; they crash and fleet

In billowy throbs of gladness, so to greet

The sandalled beauty, who, majestic,

Paces the marble floor.

Her limb-encircling garments flowing fall
In gauzy waves of whiteness evermore ;
So moves she stately on, through her great father's
hall.

The vision fades. Again the master's touch
Bids vague dissolving fancies throng the sight.

The courtly dance, with youthful limbs aglow,
Where youthful faces flush
Amid a silken rustling and the beat
Of satin shoes and lightly twirling feet.

The hall is warm and bright

With many a gem and many a spangled light.

But ah ! without, how fresh the gracious night,
On terraced gardens, where the cool airs flow
Up from the shimmering crescent of the bay
below !

And yonder in the moonlight-floods, the pace

Of lover-feet on path and terrace stair
Sounds silver sweet, while laughter everywhere
In bubbling peals lurks in each shadowy place.

Alas! my dream is shattered! Hark! the sad,
Soft rumbling that presageth coming woe!
The distance bears the sound of martial tread
With tramp depressed and slow.
That long deep note, so plaintive, yet so sweet,
Whispers the path the fairest maid must go.
Yes! heroes must lie low!—
So do those massive harmonies repeat.
How much our souls resent the clay-cold doom!
Oh! that I might but know
What dull remains of what once noble soul
They carry to the tomb!
Those wild, weird notes of gloom
Would burst the hearts wherein deep sorrows roll.

They come not near ! They fade ! They die
away

Far towards the resting-place of that dumb clay.
Fainter, and yet more faint ; soft, soft, and still
They die into the hush of some foreboding ill.
When,—hark ! from out the realms of formless
fear

Rises a note, firm, bold, and clear !

Yet lonely is it heard,
Like the first piping song of the first love-sick
bird.

It swells ; then once more wakes
The surging chorus of the banks and brakes,
And far aloft, as if on angel wings,
Above all sombre things,
At the glad touch my spirit springs
From out the realms of death, and its free flight
it takes.

Oh ! sweet, heart-healing strain !

Again and yet again,

Those vague desires and hopes insinuate

That lift the soul somewhere by Heaven's gate.

The cheerful music to full volume grows.

The deftly-handled bows

With lightning touch fly o'er the speaking strings.

The horns and deep bassoon

Exultant hurry onward. All is life

And eagerness and zest.

The flute with liquid trill,

The oboe, sharp and shrill,

And the sweet clarionet, with mellow tune,

In rival concord, and harmonious strife,

Speed with impetuous haste.

Away ! ye thoughts of death and musty sorrow !

Away ! The life we quaff

Is a wild draught of bliss from which we borrow

Wherewith to laugh !

We greet thee, merry drum !

And you, ye cymbals, come

To lift our frolic to the very mound

And pinnacle of sound.

When ah ! There rings a crash, and yet another !

The rolling drums their reckless tumult smother.

A short, sharp crash ; and then

Silence has folded close her slumbering wings again.

An Austral Sky.

AT DAWN, NEAR THE HEAD OF THE YARRA.

THE morning breaks and day awakes
To peer with peeping eyes,
And every filmy cloudlet makes
A pillow where he lies.
A thousand notes, from throbbing throats,
Salute him ere he rise,
And, down the gurgling river, floats
The blushing of the skies.

The cloudlets melt, the skies unfold
Their dome of spotless blue,

In far ethereal spaces rolled
And zones of cosmic dew.
And higher still they rise, until,
With gladness of the view,
The joys of life and living thrill
Our pulses through and through.

Oh! that my life may ever glide
Beneath this Austral sky!
That I may feel its gladness wide
Roll in on heart and eye!
No vision drear of man is here,
Despair comes never nigh,
But hope exults with healthful cheer
While heaven is lifted high.

A Song of August.

THERE lies within the leafy west
A spot of earth for ever blest,
Where balmy breaths of spring abound
And dreams encompass it around.
There never have my footsteps passed
Though winds were chill and skies o'ercast,
But memory touched it with a waft
And all the glade in sunshine laughed.

For there I sat when years were young,
While whispered music from the tongue
Of artless love came rippling free ;
And oh ! that love was love for me !

And life, like one great glory, lay
Before me then,—as when the grey
And sombre clouds of morning break
And floods of sunshine bid them wake.

At once the glories flush the skies,
At once the blending voices rise,
And cheerless things, that silent lay,
Tumultuous hail the throbbing day.
So in my heart the day-beam woke
At each confession that she spoke,
And as I drank the silvered sound
The woods like dreamland nodded round.

The student joys when sudden light
Reveals the problem full in sight ;
The poet joys when o'er his mind
A truth comes breathing like the wind.

But what were all such joys of theirs ;
What every bliss that mortal shares,
With that which poured its golden ray
To light the night and gild the day.

And should not then that spot be green,
That circle in the forest screen,
Where life its meaning first conveyed,
And all its comeliness displayed ;
Still sleep, still slumber in the west
Thou spot of earth so dear, so blest !
With thee may breaths of Spring abound,
And dreams encompass thee around.

Hetty.

WHEN Hetty, our housemaid, came to stay
With us, she was merry, her heart was gay;
And ever the kitchen and corridor rang
With her lively chat and the songs she sang.
But Hetty grew quiet, and very sedate,
For every night, by the garden gate,
There loitered a lad with leisurely feet;
'Twas a carpenter come from the neighbouring street.

Now, Hetty was pretty, and clever, and good.
That man should be happy, if any man should,
Who came to our gate at the close of day
And chatted with her in the twilight grey.

And Hetty grew merry, and hearty once more;
She swept, and she rattled, and sang as before
And her fresh girl-face had a look that said,
“A secret I’ve got of my own in my head.”
So Hetty one day with a blushing face
Came in to give notice of leaving her place;
And she said—that she thought,—that perhaps she
might be—
She would like—she would wish to give—that is if we—

Poor Hetty. We knew very well what it was.
But we asked if that carpenter lad was the cause.
She fingered her apron, and faltering said,
“If you please, he’s so good, is my carpenter lad.”
We looked very stern, and we said it was wrong
For these carpenter lads to come roving along,
And spoil the best housemaid that ever we had.
She said, “Please,—he’s so good, is my carpenter lad.”

But we only looked wiser, and solemnly said,
“Some people are happy although they are wed.”
She answered, and almost her pleading was sad.
“But, oh! he’s so noble, my carpenter lad!”
And now there’s a cottage, where Hetty can sing
All day at her labours, a blithe little thing;
And, watching at eve by the gate, she is glad
When she sees the first glimpse of her carpenter lad.

A Babe in Court.

A BABE in court ! A half translucent thing !

Pink face, pink hands from dingy flannel showing.

A little life of three days' slumbering !

A new-sprung breath, of soft and even flowing.

The constable with awkward care,

On his blue cuffs and fingers brown,

Pillows the head, and looking down

With half of pitying, half of awe-struck air,

Shields the soft lips and eyes that lie asleeping

From wondering lawyer clerks and tip-toed loungers
peeping.

A waif ! A little waif ! Its mother dead :

Her white face in a darkened room is lying :

The hospital goes toiling over-head

And hears no more her sighs, her passioned crying.

Her heart is still beneath her folded hands.

That bosom where her baby lay,

A joy, an anguish for a day,

Is still enough within those linen bands.

God keep the baby girl she leaves behind,

For life's true path is dim, and doubtful oft to find.

The slumbering bundle duly is arraigned ;

The charge against it fully formulated.

“Neglected child ! No mother !” ’tis explained.

The tale in ten short words is all narrated.

A minute more, it passes out :

A paper here and there is fluttered :

Some words of transient pity muttered ;

The wheel of law has moved a stage about.
The tender visitant is soon forgot
When that long list of sins engrosses every thought.

Sweet little babe!—intruder on life's stage!

A puzzle to us busy folks who fill it!
What love, what blessing is your heritage
Whom we would wish unborn, could we so will it?

Oh! loveless from the first!—unlovable,

The childhood that my fears presage

And a chill world for tender age,

That craves a nook in some warm heart to fill.

Oh! may the coming years bring some good friend
That shall, to those soft eyes, the light of loving lend!

In the Valley of the Upper Watts.

AN UNEXPLORED MAGNIFICENCE.

VALLEY, dark, and moist, and mossy !

Stream, and trickling boulders glossy !

Waters leaping, gliding, curling

With a soft chromatic purling !

Beechen forest far extended !

Woven leaves and branches blended

In a mighty vaulted ceiling,

Scarce the zenith-blue revealing !

Here ! oh here ! my willing steps I stay !

Take me ! oh, take me to thyself for this one
day !

What a wealth of graces lavish!—
Scents that soothe, and sights that ravish,
Scattered in these wildernesses!
See,—the long, the emerald tresses
Pendent from the trees!—the bosses
Large and round of delicate mosses!
Luscious tints of green and golden;
Things of joy, that once beholden
Sink, yes sink, into the inmost being:
In visions nestle there for the soul's secret
seeing.

Mighty forest logs decaying,
To the boom of waters swaying,
Span the river, sometimes dipping,
Sometimes splashed, but ever dripping!
Each is wrapt in mossy cushion,
Fernlets soft in bright profusion.

While upon the steep side mounting
Fern-trees rise beyond all counting,—

Here! oh here! my willing steps I stay!

Here let me rest beneath their softly rustling
sway!

All thy vastness burst upon me.

Unexpected glories won me.

Never word by mankind spoken

Hath thy silent ages broken;

But the lyre bird's heavy winging,

And the bell bird's silver ringing,

And the whip bird's sudden note

Ever through these glades did float;

And cries of those four-footed things of fur,

That from their trees do peep when evening
breezes stir.

Now, o'er the forest, noon is creeping,
 And all is still, except the leaping,
 The rush, the bound of waters speeding,
 While I loiter all unheeding,
 Drinking in at every sense
 Draughts of sweetest influence.
 And here, what poets see in dreaming,
 See in truth beyond all seeming ;

While every thought is lulled with soothing
 pleasure

Beneath the drooping fronds that wave in
 easy measure.

Nature folds me round and round
 In this valley-depth profound.
 Seated in this mighty minute
 I am of it, more than in it.
 For my thoughts, all bounds transcending,

Still extending and extending,
Joy to feel their wings can carry
Out into the regions starry.

For he who looks on Nature's mightiest mazes
Can feel the vastness pass into the soul that
gazes.

Throbbing heart of mine, confess
Words are folly to express
Tumultuous joys that swell and roll,
Surging through the awe-struck soul.
Far as these mighty trees that bear
Their tremulous crests to thinner air,—
Far as their dizzy heights transcend
This mortal frame o'er which they bend,
So far this sight of beauty doth excel
The proudest thought that words of men
could hope to tell.

Would to God that men might learn
To cease at times their bread to earn,—
That mortal food, that transient raiment,
For which they give their lives in payment,
Might grant their souls some holiday,
Slaves to tyrant frames of clay,—
Might view in some such wonder spot
All the glory round them wrought,
Might let their souls expand to thoughts
infinite,
And dream, as now I dream, in this trans-
cendent minute.

A Prayer.

LORD! when I nightly seek to know thy truth
Do thou direct me! Listen to the prayer
I oft address, that ere the flight of youth
I may resolve with reverential care
The doubts that close beset me; even where
Tranquil convictions rested heretofore.
Do thou, oh, Lord! to the inward sense declare,
In the night-watches when my heart is sore
With troubled thinking—have my hopes been vain?
Has all I once thought given by thee of yore,
Wherein to rest my soul I would be fain,—
Has all been false? Let me not evermore
Be troubled thus. Do thou, oh, Lord! again
Peaceful delights and quiet thoughts restore.

With Nature.

OFT have I joined the reverential throng
That fill our churches with their grateful song,
And heard the solemn service float along,
Yet felt no influence of the Eternal there ;
The breath I breathed was nought but
common air.

Oft have cathedrals wrapped me in their gloom
With shadowy pillar and with ghostly tomb,
While altars rolled their chants, their rich perfume,
Yet felt I not the Eternal presence there ;
The circling breath was still but common
air.

In forest valleys I have dwelt alone
A summer's day, where wildly overgrown,
The leaves made a deep darkness of their own.
At morn, in idle mood I laid me there ;
At eve I wandered home with awe-struck air.

And I have wandered by the unbounded sea
In gamesome humour, light, and gay, and free,
Till a deep voice grew audible in me ;
A voice I cannot hear where men repair ;
It grows with lonely sands and salt sea-air.

For hour by hour a subtle influence steals
And deepens inward, till my spirit feels
In those dim fastnesses it ne'er reveals
An all-enfolding presence whispering there,
And thoughts flow deep that words could
scarce lay bare.

The Human Heart and its Goal.

HAS faith grown stale? Does hope run dry

 In these our busy ages?

Does greed alone light up youth's eye

 And craft alone the sage's?

I heard the voice of him, who said,

 In accents hard and bitter:

“All noble thoughts in man are dead,

 Which once like stars did glitter.”

He said, “All hero-souls are gone,—

 Long, long ago departed,—

Who once with splendid purpose shone,
The great, the stately-hearted."

"And now," he said, "The fraudulent earth,
That in deception festers,
Bears none but men that shame their birth
From glory-crowned ancestors."

"Poor huckster hearts and base," he said,
"Of shams, and tricks, and lying,
The age of chivalry is fled,—
And manly virtue dying.

"The heart of man, grown poor and mean,
Knows nought of grand endeavour,
And it will taste of what has been
On earth no more for ever."

He rails,—this greybeard, touched with bile,—

He rails in cynic fashion,

And spins long-membered words the while

To barb his gibing passion.

'Tis false! By yonder stars he lies,

That shine in unchanged splendour,

And see the world, each time they rise

More just, more wise, more tender!

For the great human heart hath grown

More full, more deep, than ever.

Ten thousand springs into it thrown,

It widens like a river.

Each noble deed, each kindly life,

Hath helped to set it brimming.

No student toil, no patriot strife,
But flung some drops a-swimming.

And every poet's words that thrill
From out a bosom glowing,
All are like hidden threads that trill
In leafy hollows flowing.

The rills descend by ways of thorns,
But yet by many flowers,—
Through moonlight nights, and golden morns,
And veils of gauze-like showers.

And all along an hundred miles
They drop, each trickling torrent ;
And spread themselves in wreathing smiles
Upon the swelling current.

And so, ten thousand influences
 Of happy inspirations
Have joined the streams of life, and these
 Flow deep in many nations.

Thus Freedom grows ; thus Peace prevails ;
 Thus mutual Trust progresses ;
And a great dream of Right exhales
 From populous wildernesses ;

And sympathy for sick and sad
 Exerts her empire spacious ;
And arts, like wine that maketh glad
 The heart, grow ripe and gracious.

So do the centuries deepen still
 The flow of human feeling,

Till, far beyond our prophet skill

Our wildest dream-revealing ;

The heart of man, where'er it beat,

Shall beat in simple beauty,

Sincere and tender, pure and sweet,

Perfect in love and duty.

The Pestilence.**I.**

BENEATH a larch-tree, in a forest glade,
There sat a serf. His garb was rough and wild.
The tangled wool upon his sheepskin made
Grim fellowship with head and beard defiled.
His burden lay beside him, and he whiled
The minutes as he rested with a song,—
A crooning rhyme, that sang of cradled child,
Of wife, of home, which he should reach ere long.
Beyond the woods, and up the hill-slopes gray,
Perched like a nest, that lonely hamlet lay.

II.

Repeating still his song, he rose and swung
His bundle up as though to lift it high.

But stayed his hand ; the note died on his tongue.

He stood and gazed upon the western sky.

The sun was almost set. It scorched the eye
With furnace glare, and all the trees were black
Like ebon things against that brilliancy.

But far away was seen one fluttering speck
Of moving blackness that with rise and fall
Of laboured flight was wafted over all.

III.

With teeth agape, and eyes that seemed to burst.

The man stood watching, while that speck of gloom
Swept from the distance, clearer than at first.

A maiden's form, but ghastly as the tomb.

The Pestilence ! He knew her, and his doom
Smote at his knees, and on the grass he fell.

But she, alighting near the shuddering groom,
While on the air there spread a marshy smell,

With hollow-sounding words. "Fear not," she said ;
"Not for thy life I come, but for thine aid.

IV.

"That hateful power which made me what I am
Hath sent me on my mission. Over earth
I must move ever on. But late I came
From realms where I have stifled hope and mirth.
And hither am I bid to wander forth
And curse this land with bitter showers of tears.
In palace towers ; in huts of meanest worth ;
In towns ; in hamlets ; whereso'er appears
Window, or door, or hearth, of living men
I breathe one breath, and get me gone again.

V.

"But oh ! how weary these sad limbs of mine !
The maiden of the pest can fare no more !

Now must thou bear me! Those strong limbs of
thine

Must carry me to every mortal door!

The market place, the street, the public floor

We two must tread! Thou canst not thwart thy
fate!

The power hath willed it! Yet thy burden sore

No man hath power to mark. A viewless weight

Thou still must bear. Rise! Thou shalt be my
steed!

Now gird thy limbs to match their utmost speed!"

VI.

Then from the earth, like vapours miry-bred,

She rose dissolving. Round his neck she twined

Her shadowy limbs, and in his unkempt head

And burly beard her fingers slight did bind,

Then faded as a mist in parching wind.

He, looking up, perceived no trace of her,
Yet with the weight his body was inclined.
His knees were bent, and marrowless to stir,
Till all at once a flush suffused his frame,
And through his bones there sped a liquid flame.

VII.

Then started he as one possessed. He sped
With sweating limbs through forest paths afar,
And chief where tracks of many footsteps led,
Through twilight hours, until the evening star
Her cheerful beam had quenched. Irregular
The tramp of his quick footfall through the gloom.
He reached a wayside cot. The door ajar
Admitted him within a peaceful room.
She, curling from his neck, like some black mist,
The babe that slumbered in the corner kissed.

VIII.

Alas! the night was heavy in that room.

The mother, when her infant's lip she pressed,
Tasted its glow, and felt the pang of doom

Shoot straight within the hollow of her breast.

Ah! there was little time that night of rest!

The lights were hurrying to and fro, and feet

With whispering tread kept moving round the nest
Wherein with features growing angel sweet

The babe, in quickening breaths, eked out its hours:

Then lay, a sculptured thing, pure as the flowers.

IX.

Across the fields the stricken father bore

A tiny box and laid it low in clay.

Then sought again his straw-roofed house that wore

Sad signs of something wanting from the day.

But ere the morrow, she, his earthly stay,

Was speeding on the fiery road to death ;
And her the neighbours bore in sad array
Across the meadows. Ah ! the dismal breath !
The moans, the sighs, that from that cottage rolled ;
The tears—hot tears—that fell in drops untold.

X.

But meantime, he that bore the fever-maid
Afar had sped. For in that ghastly night
He spurned the highway with devouring tread
Until there came a hamlet into sight.
Its scattered huts showed many a feeble light.
Here at an open window fluttereth
A dainty curtain. In her hurrying flight
The maiden peeps within and breathes a breath.
Alas for human hopes ! next day will rest
The urchin hearts whose mirth that household
blessed.

XI.

At many a window, many an open door ;
By chink, by cranny, did the fever-maid
Breathe in that breath, with anguish barbed sore.
She kissed the priest as on his knees he prayed ;
She kissed the hind that home from revel strayed.
Two lovers sat on slopes of bundled hay,
Whispering the plans for life in union laid,
With hopes that looked beyond the wedding-day.
A musty waft they felt. Long ere they thought,
Within the churchyard was their union wrought.

XII.

Here on the road there comes a toilsome wife,
From market home returning. She receives
A touch more deadly than from subtle knife.
How soon will fade the cares o'er which she
grieves !

There is the village inn. Beneath its eaves
The ponderous benches still some stragglers hold
With beer and pipe. Their talk is of the sheaves,
Full-eared and ripe, well cut and shrewdly sold.
To-morrow's waggons wait it. But that corn
Will lie unlifted many an autumn morn.

XIII.

Still on the highway sped that fatal pair.
The skies grew starless. O'er the moorland road
The wind, with long-drawn howl, through coppice bare
Sobbed in unearthly grief; and far abroad
Thunderless lightnings on the horizon glowed.
But through the darkness, on the uneven ground,
Those heavy boots with fevered purpose trod
Dogged, though sometimes tottering in their sound.
The dawn, whose blush was cold and full of fate,
Saw them beneath a town's still fastened gate.

XIV.

That day within the town was holiday.

Right early did the guard his bolts withdraw,
And through the portal passed that peasant gray.

But none his spectre-burden guessed, or saw
How his eyes glared ; how red his lips and raw :
For all the bells were rolling merriment.

They, tumbling, pealed as though one loud guffaw,
Which woke the slum'bring houses. So there went
A cheerful stir through every morning street,
And loitering sounds of early passing feet.

XV.

But soon the streets are gay ; a mirthful crowd
Fills all the market-place. The matrons there,
In conscious comeliness and garments proud,
Stroll in and out, and many a joke they share.
The maids in saucy skirts and ribboned hair,

With kerchiefs neatly folded on their breasts ;
The men, in trim attire, with gallant air
Display the adroitness of their flattering jests.
But where that peasant rough his way pushed
through,
The throng in angered silence paused to view.

XVI.

By market-place, by street, by court, by lane
That weary man sped onward, as impelled.
The jolly chimes kept on their gleeful strain,
The fiddle and the flute their tumult swelled,
And fluttering flags were in long lines beheld ;
Yet never rest, nor pause that peasant knew.
Through every street his jostling way he held,
At last ere noon his toil therein was through ;
And he, departing, sought some other town
Which he might traverse ere the sun went down.

XVII.

How jocund were the sports that afternoon !

The townsfolk flocked beyond their ancient wall,
And there the fiddlers squeaked their friskiest tune,
And mazy circles held the dancers all.

The booths beneath the lindens met the call
Of many a bachelor and blushing maid,

Who quenched the thirst of their warm festival
In oft-replenished draughts. And long they stayed
Upon the grass, although the dews were chill,
And midnight passed ere all the streets were still.

XVIII.

But far and fast that weary man had sped :

Nor sleep, nor food, nor rest his limbs had
known.

His boiling veins were with his vitals fed.

With many a burst of pity did he groan

To feel how far the fever breath was sown.
A score of hamlets and a slumbering city,
A populous palace, and a castle lone
Had felt its waft. And oh ! the ruth, the pity !
Disease, pain, death, with grief and blinding sorrow,
Waited for each throughout the hopeful morrow.

XIX.

Upon the second morning, his sad way
Turned back upon the town of festival.
He passed far off ; yet many a long array
He well might mark, winding from out the wall.
A dreary murmur wailed and sobbed o'er all.
A sound of lamentations, and the fell
Shouts of deep throats, and feebler pipings small,
And the fierce booming of the passing bell,
Rising above the tumult, loud and grim,
To break the roll of many a funeral hymn.

XX.

And so, from day to day, o'er all the land,
There spread an ocean of despairing sound.
An emperor had seen his rosy band,
Four flaxen heads, with lead encoffined round.
Ten thousand lowlier homes, that once were crowned
With the same wealth divine of childhood, wept,
Where spluttering candles through the night
profound
Flickered their light on forms that coldly slept.
And all the land was wailing, and a cry
Rose, streaming upward far within the sky.

XXI.

Not many places lay so hid, so close
But that the fever-maiden there had spread
Her mortal breath. And oh! how wild she was!
All trace of sweet humanity was fled,

And fierce her lips with the grim work she sped.
With vulture-scream she waved and tossed on high
Her linen shroud, and shook her tresses red.
A furnace glowed through either wandering eye.
Astride upon the peasant's shoulders there,
She twined her fingers in his tangled hair.

XXII.

And cried, "Alala! on, my charger, on!
No more will these folks roam a-junketing!
From morn till eve, from eve until the dawn,
They fill the hours with heavy labouring,
To dig the pits wherein their dead to fling.
Now leftward turn! A mountain hamlet lies
Beyond this wood, where men still laugh and sing
Unconscious. On a craggy crest there rise
Three ruined towers; and climbing towards their feet,
In straggling fashion, runs the village street."

XXIII.

She showed a pathway through the forest gloom.

Alas! the peasant shook in every limb.

That hamlet he knew well. It was his home ;

And in its school, five sturdy grafts from him,

Five rosy children, nowise neat nor trim,

Yet gay with noisy tricks, might then be taught.

And, oh ! his eye could see, not faint, not dim,

The cot hard by, where at the steaming pot

His wife might toil ; could see the inner room

Where stood her bed and his, within the gloom.

XXIV.

And up the sloping bareness of the street,

There stood a cottage, where his parents old

Stepped in and out with slow deliberate feet ;

And there the green whereon his youngest rolled,

His baby, dearest of the precious fold.

Should death destroy them? Should those joyous
eyes

Be pressed for ever into darkness cold?
That loving wifely bosom, his heart's prize,
Must that with all its bliss be swept away,
To mix its warmth with senseless chill of clay?

XXV.

Thus, as he faced the track, his heart was fierce.

It hammered hard through every turgid vein.
His shaggy eye-brows twitched; he tried to pierce
The forest growth, now right, now left; the pain
Of brambles and sharp spikes, that brought a rain
Of crimson drops, were nothing if he might

But burst the cursed fate that like a chain
Compassed his strength in fetters close and tight.
But all in vain. He could not leave the track,
That path which led to wife and children back.

XXVI.

That pathway bent where flowed a forest stream.

It skirted close the murmuring waters. Then

The whirlwind passions of his spectre dream

Burst in a frenzied cry. For of all men,

None better knew than he that tree-clad glen.

And, through its mazes, now he knew, not far

The distance lay that led him home again.

Then loud he prayed by every saint and star,

And sought, with tears and broken words, to bend

That reckless maiden from her obstinate end.

XXVII.

Alas! she heard him not! but doubly wild,

Still urged him on the path. There lay a pool

Upon the left whereby the road defiled,

Unknown of depth, dark, silent, smooth and cool,

Wherein awhile the stream with waters full

Slept from its brawling in a gulf profound.

There, with a leap that burst her iron rule,
He sprang from out the path in one great bound.
One moment through the brushwood bank they fell,
The while he clutched her feet invisible.

XXVIII.

Swift as a meteor on September night,

They flashed and vanished. O'er her sinking
head

The waters closed. Five circles, smooth and bright,
With sparkling rim their silent ripples spread,
Till on the banks a chirping sound they made;
Then all was still; and all was dark again.

The waters slept in shadows dull and dead,
Till to their surface, in a beaded train,
A line of bubbles from the unseen sprung,
The last hard gasps that throttling death had wrung.

XXIX.

And where, or how, the fever-maiden fared,
On earth of mortals was there none could know.
But soon that land no more of life despaired.
The plague no longer wandered to and fro ;
The bells had rest from mournful tolling slow.
In shrunken crowds again the markets met,
And life resumed, though lame, its wonted flow ;
And even mirth, which hastens to forget,
At length with timid wiles her healing powers,
Suffused to cheer that land from midnight hours.

XXX.

Yet none through all that land the secret learned
Whereby their peace was wrought. 'Tis ever so.
From humble sacrifice, by none discerned ;
From unknown grappling with the fever foe,
'The might must spring that shall its head lay low.

Deep in sweet streams of running water drowned,
The fever plague no more shall come and go,
When every man, to guard his home's sweet bound,
Shall sacrifice himself at that dear altar,
Facing the task with heart that will not falter.

Home and the World.

As yon great rock, by wind and waters torn,
Lifts its red cliffs in seams and fissures worn,
On it the waves, in leagues of tumbling white,
Break in their wrath, and wreathe with hissing spite.
The hoarse impact ascends but half the way
To wet its brow with ineffectual spray.
At every blow the cliff upon its base
Shudders, and yet unmoved throws up its ruddy
face.

There, at its foot, there lies a dainty pool
Behind it spread ;
Sheltered from every wind, that crystal cool
Reflects its storm-vexed head,

Hiding, in that pure bosom beautiful,
The grassy brow that tips the glowing red.
That head, in shining peace, lies nestling there,
And round it sweet things fair,—
Those snowy veils that dream upon the blue,
Where heaven shines through,
And all that glad expanse of light and air
Lie slumbering, where
Those yellow topmost flowers, that tufted grass,
Sleep in their tender glass,
Forgetful of the sea and all the storms that pass.

So be thou in the world. So raise thy life.
On one side swelling from the petty strife
Of men and business care ;
But on the other, where
Thy home extends the smoothness of its breast,
Sinking in trustful rest.

The vulgar ways of vulgar-scheming men,
Again and yet again,
Ruffle thy front with prejudice and clatter !
Those waves in spray will scatter.
Choose thou the right. What if the angry play
Of bitter words roll round thee day by day,
'Tis no great matter.
Small tongues and frivolous brains,
Full of their sordid gains,
May toil and boil and bubble at thy foot,
And keep commotion, yet
Thyself they need not fret
If high thou rear thy front and upward shoot
Into that sphere of intellect where the fruit
Of life exalted shall be thine, the peace,
The sweet calm dignity, the solid ease
That trifles little reck,
Soaring too high aloft for petty cares to vex.

Yet not too far from earth
And all its simple mirth !
Keep thou thy home, a sheltered place and calm,
For thy soul's daily balm.
There, bosomed soft and deep
With all things lovely be thy healthful sleep.
Let not its breast be curled
With storms thou bearest from the outer world,
But let affection spread
A downy bosom for a restful head.
So mayst thou find that though thy front may rise
From curish cares to bask in sunny skies ;
Yet downward too it sinks to seek repose
Among the cheerful throng whereon the firelight
glows.

Love and the Law.

THEY two were wedded on an April morn.
Another April came, and still the sweet,
The dream-like softness of their golden days
Hung balmily above them, as the spring
Dwelleth perennial o'er some coral isle.
Happy their fortune in its median lot.
Happy in that suburban street their cottage,
Where, through the leafy shrubs,—a garden small,—
Two windows, white with dainty curtain folds,
Gave sweet suggestion of a dainty home.
There, as she bustled through her housewife day.
Her hours were one dear dream of evening's kiss.
He to his toils abroad, as morning grew,

Waving the last farewell, addressed his steps ;
Therein, with hearty vigour, laboured well,
A man of trust with those he served. And yet,
Whate'er of zeal might fill the garrulous day,
There slept a corner, all unknown to men,
Deep in his tranquil heart, where, falling unheard,
A light, like sunbeams, played.

As one who digs

In some rich garden, on a sunny morn,
Hears, though he scarcely heeds them, the rich
 notes,
The cadences of spring-enraptured birds ;
Breathes, though he thinks not of it, blended
 scents
From summer-basking blossoms, and is glad
He knows not why : So toiled that ardent heart,
And drank a bliss unconscious. For there shone
The warmth of that dear moment, when, at eve,

A bosom soft should press him, two fond lips,
Two love-belustred eyes, upturned, should meet
A rain of kisses. Happy were their days.

To her no man on earth was as her own.
This might be worth in this, and that in that.
But for all worthiness,—all the sum of good,
Her own was such as never breathed, nor breathes.
He, too, looked into eyes wherein he saw,
Unmatched on earth, sweet, self-forgetful love
Shine as the light shines from full-circled moons.
How potent is the comeliness that plays
On simple faces lit by mutual love !
Therefore it is that not one loveliest,
Not one most exquisite face of woman dwells
Among earth's crowds of women. Many such,—
Many the loveliest,—many are the best,—
As many as the hearts of honest men,
Wherein true love hath found its sacred shrines.

So they two dwelt in gladness, and there came
Other and other Aprils, but no babe;
No white-socked feet pattered upon their floors;
No prattling tongue kept theirs in busy talk
To tell the wonders of its gathering wit.
Therefore the more was each to other bound;
Therefore the more did each the other tend
With watchful fondness that might make amends.
And so in peaceful wise the years rolled by;
The winter evenings by the social fire
With novel or with history read aloud.
The summer eve more oft abroad, to taste
Whatever offered of amusement, meet
For loving comradeship.

But the eighth spring
Brought a faint cloud to dull their azure sky.
For she, at times, her hand upon her side
With lightning speed would press, and a quick cry

Told of a pain that flashed, and stabbed, and went.

Yet, save the pallor of a minute, left

No trace when it had sped. She saw his heart

Troubled and heavy, and she rallied him.

“’Twas nothing. Some such passing spasm,” she
said,

“As delicate frames of women often bear.”

And all too gladly was he comforted ;

And yet he might have quailed had he seen all ;

Had he but known how with the passing months

More frequent came the shafts of poignancy ;

But she, with wifely courage, schooled herself

And learnt to bear in silence. Not a glance,

No twitch, no start betrayed the secret stab :

But where they had come by weeks, they came by
days ;

And where they had come by days, they came by
hours ;

And on her features wrote their desolate tale
In lines that might be read of all men,—all
But eyes of love, which lurking dread makes blind.

Alas those wakeful hours! when by his side
She heard the chimes that lengthened to the hour,
The hours that lengthened out, with each a stroke
Added to that before; and then would come
The ghostly faintness of the creeping dawn,
And from the grayness, slowly, one by one,
Emerged the features of the misty room.

Those hours of night while still he slept, she
 passed
With thoughts unutterable in any speech.
For well she felt the doom that glided near;
And well she boded of the parting hour.
Yet, for she deemed no cure could be, she strove
Never by word or moan, or whispered sigh,
To breed suspicion ere her time should come.

More tender, yet less joyous grew her love ;
More eager, yet less satisfied his care ;
And earth, somehow, its brightness seemed to
show

Through dingy haze, and life its healthful tide
Sped with a lessening impulse in his veins.
To wake at morn brought the full throb no more
Of joy-remembering consciousness ; a gloom
Gathered, and love could chase it not away :
Nor tender words, nor felt nor given caress,
Nor balmy eves together, nor the morn
With soft renewal of companionship.

At last it chanced he opened wide his eyes,
Too fondly closed before, to see the truth.
Then, in her wasting cheeks, her pallid brow,
Her eyes, with lustre now no longer soft,
Liquid and full, but glassy bright, he read
Her secret from her ; and he urged confession.

At first she thought to baffle him ; but love,
If once it lose its blindness, penetrates
With quick-eyed vision born of jealous dread,
And so the truth perforce she granted. On his
breast

Leaning the meekness of her nut-brown head,
She gave her long-pent anguish full relief.
Long flowed her tears,—long shook her delicate
frame

In silent throbs ;—then words found broken course.

“Oh, darling one, that made my life so bright—
My sum of earth, and all earth’s happiness—
Soon must I leave thee !”

He, with trembling limbs,
And face grown white as face of shrouded corpse,
Kissed the pale sweetness of her nestling brow.

“Leave me, my love,” he said, “thou dearest one,
Brightest and kindest of all wives that are !

Thou shalt not leave me, for in God's good world
There must be remedy, and we shall seek
Such skill as shall dispel our fears!"

And close

He pressed her sobbing heart to his; but she,
Checking the inward swelling of her tears,
Grew calm and said:

"Glad shall I be, how glad,
To share your hope. And what the power may be
Of science let us make trial. Yet my trust
Is frail, is very frail. And oh, my love,
To die would not be sad in days like mine
Were I not leaving thy sweet fellowship!"

Here, breaking in upon her discourse, he:
"But we shall cure these pains. Our frugal cares,
Thy watchful zeal in household management,
Have left us wherewithal to pay the skill
Of whatsoever lives of reputation;

Within our cup of fate, believe me, yet
There brimmeth many a year of happiness."

Then with a smile—a smile enframed in sadness,—
Her eyes replied to his a mild assent.
As one who fain would be convinced, yet feels
No inward mastery of conviction, so
She ceased from argument, and silent lay
With arms enclaspt around him, till a pang
Struck her and left her drooping; and she drew
From him apart to rest her faintness, still
Holding his hand in hers; and so they sat
Till twilight deepened darkly.

All that eve

Assiduously he tended her! All night
Awake he lay, conning the names of those
Whose manifold triumphs in the healing art
Were wideliest noised abroad. When morning came
He told her of his choice, whereto she made

A soft assent, as one who had no part,
No care, no interest, but to pleasure him.

And so, betimes, while still the day was fresh,
They sought that stately mansion, and a place
Found in the whispering room which, waiting, sat :
A suffering throng that, one by one, distilled
Through the green portal, to that inner place
Where the great man heard half a city's woes.
Long was their turn in coming, but it came ;
And then, the threshold crossed, they stood at last
In that expectant moment of their fate.
But, as they seated them, that masterful face,
Bending its keen grey eyes upon her, read
Full half her secret from her, ere a word.
A darkly resolute face it was, and nerved
To fight, as oft it fought, a desperate fight
With death, if that there lay of life a hope.
He heard their tale, and clouded was his brow.

A few brief questions asked, and little uttered,
He made appointment, when his leisure served,
To visit at their home. A kindly word,—
Kindlier for the gruff voice that uttered it,—
A tone of sympathy that seemed a knell,—
And they were in the open.

How the mild sun
Flooded with joy the outward parts,—in vain,—
Having no power to touch the inward gloom!
How hollow sounded then the sparrows' twitter
Echoing through dreary vaults of desolate hearts!
So did he homeward fare, as in a land
Of feigned enchantments; where no thing he saw
Was real, nor any sound he heard was aught
But fantasy of a dream.

Evil that dream;
Evil the night, and evil still the morrow;
And his heart sweated drops of anxious dread,

While the dull hours of sunshine sullenly rolled
And brought the time appointed.

Sharply the steeds
With jar of wheels drew in their course ; and
then
Forth with the swinging door the man of science
Sprang, and a second followed. So they passed
Into the house and shut themselves alone,
To read that mystery of a suffering fate.

It was an hour that wrought more time to him
In his full heart than many a year had made :
But with those echoing footsteps it was done.
How thirst the eyes of fearful love to drink
The tidings borne on arbitrating faces !
Alas, they omened ill ! He read her fate,
And from their lips he heard it. It was death ;—
A lingering death,—a death of pangs and pains,
And creeping weakness.

Then they went, and he
Heard their farewell, their somewhat-purporting words,
As one who dwelleth ever by the sea
Might, wrapt in study, hear its billows fall—
Hear without hearing. And awhile he stood
To let his whirling thoughts fly round, that poured
In crazy riot through his nerveless mind ;
And, one by one, those words that hovering strove
To reach his heart, like seabirds round a lighthouse,
Found entrance there, and with them, as they grew
To semblance of their meaning, anguish rose
And swelled and burst, and so he cast himself
To wrestle with his turbulent hour alone.
And none beheld his silent-heaving sides ;
And none might hear the quivering of his breath ;
And none could know of all that passed within.

That dark hour crossed, that deep abysmal gulf,
Which sundered happy from despairing life,

There came a calm; cheerless, yet such as men
May clothe in cheerful seeming, and he passed
To seek her bedside, with his countenance
Set to a comfortless smile. So do the waves
Glitter with shimmering sparkle when the sun
Throws its first glint after the hurricane gloom.
Over the vessel gulfed, the ripples leap;
While unconsoling glitter, drearily bright,
Shines, surface sweet, above a depth of sorrow.

So, cheerlessly bright, he sat beside her bed,
Comforting with caresses, for of words
He had no craft to fashion comfort yet.
She, offering her pale lips to kiss him, said:

“I know it all; I know what thou dost know,
And what has meant for thee the hour that’s gone.
How my heart melted at thy suffering!”

Thereat he trembled and his raven beard
Stooped till it mingled with her hair.

“Seven years !

Only seven years,” he groaned, “of happiness,
And life is over, for these years are fled !”

“Not wholly fled,” she answered ; “who can tell
How far my lame days yet may totter on?
And well I promise, while my life shall last,
We two shall still make each the other’s cheer.
See,” and she rose upright, “I have no thought
To lie abed yet many a summer’s day.
Now, stay by me, and while I dress do thou
Once more become my clumsy waiting-maid !”

She rose and decked herself with scrupulous care,
Breathing a tender gaiety in her talk.
She bade him smoothe the bed that ruffled lay.
She kept him playfully busy, and a kiss
Repaid each willing service, till, betimes,
A little of that blackness rolled away
Which had before enveloped earth and him.

Such is the magic loving courage can.
And when they two sat by their evening meal,
Though life seemed aged grown, its age was calm;
And after, when beside the leaping fire
He drew the sofa fronting it, she lay
Restful, in joyous respite from her pain.
Oh what a long sweet lover eve was that!
And, when at length they sought their couch, their
 hearts
Drawn wondrous close in love, pressed close their
 pulses,
Till peace grew full, and a long slumber fell.
And many days and many weeks ensued
Of sombre peacefulness; though her the pain,
The sudden stab oft-times oppressed, her face,
Doubly and trebly steeled, no token gave.
He, as his former care lent ample warrant,
Leaving his post, no more fared city-ward.

He spent his days with her. They walked abroad ;
They plied light garden tasks ; they read together ;
They communed much, and so the time passed by,
Sweet with a mournful sweetness, sadly bright.

But time, the happiest time, destroys himself.
The happier he, the speedier is his doom.
And happy days were over, for her pains
Were such at length as human fortitude
Might not defy. And she grew weak ; her face,
Pallidly sweet, was marked with deepening lines.
Then in his eyes a yearning woke, and shone
Sad beyond utterance.

And no more they walked
Breathing the outer air together. Slowly
She paced the rooms leaning upon his arm ;
Now this, now that, as restlessness of woe
Urged her in desolation to make trial.
And then the nights ! Alas, those weary nights !

No blessed balm of sleep, but broken lulls
Of half-distracted senses : till he prayed,
Although the prayer was anguish, till he prayed
Through the long darkness, marred with tossing pain,
Prayed that her life might end.

And for a time

It seemed his prayer was heard, for her decline
Was daily hastening, and she cared no more
To stir about. Her slow and tottering limbs
Bore her so feebly that she fain would lie,
Resting abed ; sometimes in his strong arms
Borne to this sofa and anon to that.
And doctors came, and looked, and talked, and went ;
But all as one agreed that life not long
Might now protract its pitiful tediousness.
And one at last, so frail so worn her look,
So passing her weird beauty, prophesied
That with the month her life would vanish. Sweet

As harbour-home to shipwrecked mariner
She saw that goal in sight ; while, in his love,
He too rejoiced to know the end not far.
Though where, when she was gone, where upon
earth

He might betake his sorrow ; with what hope
He should confront existence ; how his days
Could still go moving onward, she departed,
He wearily wondered ; but the view lay dark.

And yet the end so prayed for came not nigh,
For hidden springs of strength poured fitful aid
To feebly fill her shrinking current of life.

A desperate strife her bodily power prolonged
Against disease, and pain, and sleepless nights.
But, in her woe, she wept, and moaned, "Oh, God ;
When will it end ?" And from one tortured darkness
Livid with agony, there burst the cry,
"Oh, if thou love me, dear one ; if thou love me,

Give me some draught, give me some draught of death
To end my life and this! Oh, give me rest!"

He felt his arm by fevered fingers grasped;
And his soul shuddered with excess of agony.
He soothed her, moistening those dry lips of hers;
But it was long before the unutterable time
Passed over her, and she lay still and death-like.
Ah! not once only, nor a score of times!
But many scores came of such deadly pangs;
And what in body she endured,—in mind
He suffered with a trebled poignancy.
And oft he groaned, "Oh, thou good God! how long,
How long is this to last beneath Thy sight?"

At length a dumb importunate whisper spoke
From out his anguish, and whenas she dosed,
Sometimes in quiet of an afternoon,
He read, in history, tales where men make bold
And slay their wives to save them: seeking death

Themselves hereafter. That grim tale of York
And Hebrew courage did he oft repeat,
Till a dim purpose grew within his heart.

When next a doctor passed his door he asked,
With hoarsely altered voice, "How long, think you,
Might this thing last?" The worthy veteran
Wove endless chains of sense-enveloping words;
Till he, impatient, striking at the core,
Reached the short truth that science was at fault.
Her life, ere then, should have been merged in peace
Had symptoms prophesied their due results.
That death was certain none, he said, could doubt;
But when, it now seemed futile to forecast.

So bleeding love was left again to dream
Of months and months of nameless agony.
But in the dead of night, when next the cry
Woke the sad rest of that sick-lighted room,
Then to her tortured words, "Does no one love me

Enough to bring me one sweet draught of peace?

Oh, dearest, you could give it me!"

There came

The deep and solemn answer, "And I will

But she, as hearing not, lay still and panting,
While through an endless hour her breath came quick :
Then till the morning lay as one entranced.

At last, returning ease brought back the words
Muttered in horror of her midnight woe,
And she, as one in fear, rose up and said,

"Dearest, come near me ! What were those words
of thine

That answered to my madness? Do not dream
Of aught so rash, for though I pray for death,
And from thy hand would drink it gladliest,
Yet such a deed thou must in no wise dare.
The world would rank such kindness as a crime :
Thy life might be the forfeit of thy love."

Yet he, in scorn, "My life! my life a forfeit!
What is my life to me? I love it not.
If thou be gone, life is to me a corpse,—
A cold, dull semblance whence the soul is fled.
We bury dead things—view not their decay.
What were a mummied life for me that have
Remembrance of its juiciest freshness? No!
I loathe the thought of living. Rather we,
Together leaving life, shall fare together,
And learn what life awaits of milder rule
Where kindlier reigns of Providence have sway."

But she, holding apart, convulsed with fear,
In quickening accents whispered, "No; not thou!
Ah no, my love, not thou! my love, not thou!
Oh, it was nothing, that most meaningless cry
Wrung from my wandering lips through misery!
God will give peace, and I shall wait his will!"

And answer made he none; but his grim thought

Was ever with him, and he conned it o'er.
Though days passed by, yet every day that passed
Strengthened his thought.

For every midnight cry
Curdling his blood, while the great city slept,
And every touch of that pain-wetted brow,
And every frenzied grip of those dear fingers,
And every stony glance of mute appeal,
Deepened his purpose.

And there came a night
When all was eerie still, save for the jars
Of creaking midnight. Resting upon a chair,
One sallow light beside the bed lit up
A wasted arm hanging from out the sheets ;
It lit a white face, framed in shadowy hair,
Lovely but spectral. Up and down he paced
With feverish step, while maddening grief convulsed
His face and tremulous hands, for he had gazed,

Helpless once more, on all that withering scene,
Which left her death-like there. But when her
strength

With faint return of day revived, he said :

“ God be my witness that I love thee truly ;
And what is there that true love will not dare ?
Does it fear death ? What reck's it of men's
tongues ?

To-morrow night shalt thou, my love, drink deep ;
Drink and dream out of sorrow. Drink, and away
Be wafted, if some spirit clime there be
Untouched of this world's dreariness ; and I
Shall drink a fellow draught ! and if the law
Have any charge on me, it mounteth not
Unto my life. Yet I shall give my life
In full requital and shall owe it nought.”

And when the night was changed to chill grey light,
She bade him sit beside her, and they reasoned

Of right and law, of love and love's behests,
In tortuous chase of ethic principle.
He showed the dreariness of his lonely life,—
No sin could be in loving tenderness,—
Rather the law was debtor for a deed
Of kindly purpose.

And her doubting mind
By slow degrees took comfort, and a hope,
Never before contemplated, made bright
The slowly wakening prospect. Not alone,—
No, not alone should she now face the way;
But with her loved one, faring side by side,
Should pierce the glooms of chaos, and his smile,
Dearer than visioned angels', might perchance
Light up the darkness of the measureless voids,
Star-dotted and yet chill.

And daylight crept
Upon them as they talked. Its beams were cold:

But rosy were their hopes. That rising day
Would light a world to toil, but them to peace.
For as it closed they two, such their design,
Soaring together, were to spurn this earth,
Making mysterious explorations far
Among the starry hosts. And when he slipped
His hand beneath her tresses to lift up
Her bloodless lips to taste the throbbing love
That warmed his own, no face on earth more glad ;
No eye that beamed more placidly than his.

The sun ascended on a genial morn,
And dipped upon a golden afternoon.
He spent them in that little kitchen, neat
And bright and trimly packed ; her dainty realm,
Wherein, through many a bygone cheerful day,
She, toiling in her happy labours, dreamt
Of eve and him and kisses. On her table,
Bleached white with much assiduous cleanliness,

He plied a task too slight to seem so deadly ;—
A glassy flask, some tubes, a pale blue flame,
And slow and sullen drops of distillation.
Yet on that task there shone slantwise the sun
With peaceful rays dust-spangled. The great world
Smiled in its healthful beauty.

Twilight came,
And for a last time they their converse held
On and still on amid the gathering gloom,
As had been oft in many a happy eve.
And then she said, "My heart misgiving grows
Of this our desperate purpose. Pain is selfish ;
And I, too selfish, thought but of myself
And that glad promise of thy comradeship.
Forget that I assented. Let it be.
In God's good time I die, but thou shalt wait.
With many a duty yet perchance in store,
Till fate fulfilled shall bid thee follow me."

And he made answer : "No ; we both must die.
Should I not risk my life to save a stranger's ?
Should I not lose it to save thine at need ?
And shall I not have power to lose it now
Doing thee faithful service ?"

But she, faltering,—
"Oh, dearest one, thy life hath far more worth
Than for such cause to be so lightly cast ;
To-night when next my terrible time is come,
And pain has nerved my courage, give me the
draught,

But live thou on and think of me. Keep green
My favourite flowers upon my grave ; keep fresh
Within thy heart the memory of our loves.
Dream of me where I dwell, and if I may
From out the starry regions stoop, thy dreams
Will feel a radiant influence, and will bloom
In heart-contenting visions of my joy !"

But he, as one determined, made reply :
“This cannot be. Consenting to thy death
I arm the laws against me. It is fixed.
I go with thee. We leave a warring tide
Of jangling words to praise or blame our fate.
Their possible babble did distract my purpose.
But that is passed. Now let them talk, say I.
Perchance the popular heart, hearing our tale,
May melt to know thy suffering and our love,
And shed—a three days’ talk—the impotent shower
Of pitiful words over our published names.
What need we care? What recks the morning sun
That some may bless his rising, and some curse.
His sphere is far from theirs ; and further still
Shall ours be from these prating tongues, ere morn
Awakes them once more to their gossiping.”

And to his stronger will her will gave way.
So when the lights were lit he busied him

Ranging his papers. Some he burnt; some laid
Conspicuously about him; some he packed
In bundles to their separate resting-places.
And whilst he deftly moved, she woke and slept
In fitful turns, until her breath came short,
And a faint sigh suppressed gave warning note.
It was a sound he knew. Kneeling beside her
He held her hand, while in fierce throbs the pain
Frenzied her features till she hoarsely cried,
“The draught! the draught! Quick! quick! Give
me the draught!”

With trembling hands he poured, and held it up
To touch her out-stretched lips; she drank, and,
shuddering,
Sank on her pillow motionless, while the pain
Ebbd slowly from her. Then once more her eyes
Opened and shone that light of tenderness
Upward upon him; and when ease was come,

“Dearest,” she whispered, “dearest one, farewell.
My heart is grateful for these loving years.
My senses taste a touch of exquisite languor.
Lay thy cheek here upon the pillow near me,
And I shall drowse into thy neighbouring ear
The last words of these lips.”

And then she spoke
Things that were sacred things betwixt these twain,
While his deep voice, sinking in solemn whispers,
From time to time made answer.

Then rising up,
Feeling his face, she kissed him, and she murmured,
“It is the last; sleep holds me,—far away,—
My husband—”

Then her face lay softly slumbering,
White amid white, like snowdrops ridged with snow.
Some formless words, but pretty, passed her lips;
Then merged her life in silence, and she lay

Breathing, but dead. Long by her bed he knelt,
And his great sob was felt o'er all the room ;
A silent throb and nameless ; and he poured
Such tide of passionate prayer as needs must reach,
Whatever dwells on high of deity.

Faint and more faint her breathing, till her breast
Lost its last heaving, and her spirit passed.
And thrice he kissed her chilly lips, and thrice
Each closèd eyelid ; and long time he gazed
Upon the lily sweetness gathered there ;
Then ordered decently the folded sheet
Over her silent heart.

And then he moved
With awesome step, yet steady, through the house.
Closed every door, through which the city sounds
In the dull midnight passed ; the windows closed ;
Quenched all the lights, save that alone which burnt
Within the room of death. Then poured his draught

And raised it to his lips ; yet set it down
Once more to view, with tear-belustred gaze,
The sweet translucent whiteness of her face ;
And many times he kissed it, till his heart
Grew all too great, too wild to be contained.
Then dashing the light to darkness, he tossed up
The potion-glass and drank an eager death.

Then, creeping past her strangely motionless form
He laid him by it, till a numbness came,
And pleasant visions moved his smiling lips.
And once more, as his wont had been, he slipped
A sheltering arm beneath her clustering tresses.
So did the midnight waft across them there,
And, ere the dawn, his spirit passed. There lay
Two lover forms in silence, and the chill
Of morning gathered slowly round them.

My Little Ones.

My heart is aching, and my eyes are full.

Oh little ones, sweet little ones at rest

How dear ye are ! How dear and lovable

Two baby heads upon one pillow pressed

Here have I sat and heard your childish chat,

So sweet, so simple, cadenced like a brook

And joy came throbbing to my heart thereat,

Feeling the loving word,—the trustful look.

And now ye slumber, for the day is done.

Those nimble tongues, those busy brains are still ;

Back, back ye tears, why should ye seek to run

With morn their voices all the house will fill

But ah ! I dream of times when ye no more
Shall laugh as now ye laugh with baby glee ;
When ye shall bring me other joys in store,—
But these for ever lost to you and me !

Therefore my heart is full. I cannot drink
So deeply of this draught, but in those years
That are to come, I oft must sit and think
On these sweet days, and long, yes long with tears
That once again, upon this little bed,
I might but lean and hear your baby talk,
And join your laugh, and stroke each darling head
And feel your hands my fingers warmly lock.

Good night, ye slumb'ring dears—and fairy dreams !
May the years coming lie upon us light,
To leave our life awhile as now it seems,
And ye be long as children in my sight.

In Dreams.

HER arms about my neck will cling
In dreams for ever and for ever ;
A gentle little six-year thing
For ever and for ever.

She is a dream of vanished bliss,—
A dream for ever and for ever ;
But oh ! the anguish of her kiss !
For ever and for ever.

And still she sits upon my knee,
In dreams, for ever and for ever,

And lays her nestling head on me
For ever and for ever.

I was her darling. She *is* mine,
In dreams, for ever and for ever.
Sweet little fingers, clasp and twine,
About my neck for ever.

A Dirge.

DEEP are her slumbers, and fear no awaking.

The kind earth hath folded her into its breast.
O'er the dark cypress when morning is breaking,
None will arouse the dear babe from her rest.

For the sweet soul that awoke with the dawning
Never shall brighten the love-sparkled eye.
Nor the sweet voice with its gentle intoning
Waken to music as day rises high.

Silent she sleeps in the dew-sprinkled morning
Silent when sunbeams fall soft on her tomb ;
Silent and sad when the night-shades returning
Wrap the still grave and the cypress in gloom.

Shelley.

HAST ever seen the moon
Shine upward from the depths of some wide lake
Upon a placid eve, too soon
For the first breath of dew-chilled air to wake?
Her clear-cut crescent glows
With filigree of radiant cloudlets round,
No blur in all the glorious depths is found.
But far away it shows,—
That lustrous vault profound—
Wherein the mimic moon sleeps underground.
Cold is its stately beauty; and remote
From men, and lives of men, its motionless splendours
float.

So sleeps within the thought
Of some great poet his immortal fire.
While sufferings touch it not,
It shines in depths profound,
Nor gives to upper air one throb, one sound.
All underneath the lives of men it glows—

Those common cares that tire
And vex the souls that hurry to and fro.
But deep within his breast,
As in some stately dome of throned rest,
It dreams in shining sleep,
And its regardless path in its own sphere doth
keep.

Thus men, who rarely look
Far in the depths of slumbrous lake or brook,
Nor often seek to find
The thoughts that build the life of some calm
mind,

See not the moon that rides
In glory far below the summer tides.
Nor yet the light profound,
That shines in poet-breast without a throb or sound.

Hast marked the waters stirred
By that first breath of eve which lightly passes,
With rustling scarcely heard,
What time upon the tremulous tips of grasses
The dew has hung its stars of atomy flashes?
With that first ripple all the moony deep
Dissolves its distant sleep,
And when the breezes wake,
Across the surface creep
Wide floods of glory o'er the shimmering lake.
No longer far away
With coldly tranquil ray,
No longer set on meditative throne

In kingdoms all its own,
But nearer, clearer, kindlier to the glance
It spreads its broad expanse.
Then men, though hurrying on their various ways,
Stop, and a moment gaze
To mark the splendour of that quivering blaze ;
And, as it kindles to the spell-bound eye,
In exquisite awe, they, standing long, enjoy
That beauty which is theirs, because they deem
it nigh.

And such the change which breaths of suffering
Over the poet's lonely spirit bring.
Where meditation sat with soft wings furled,
Far in another world,
A breeze of pain from out the sordid earth
Wafts,—and a flood of glory springs to birth.
That orbéd radiance which was throned afar

Bursts into many a star,
And all that light which not a pulse did mar
In self concentrated,
Now in wide floods of tremulous glory shed
Across the wondering hearts of awestruck men is
spread.

Hail, holy power ! Hail, touch divine of sorrow !
From thee our singers borrow
That moving force which, wafting as a breeze,
Dispels their voiceless ease,
And bids them spring to meet our human sympathies !

Thou, Shelley, thou wast wrung
By many a pang, so that thy thirty years,
With life and hope still young,
Might well have been a term of nightly tears.
But thou hadst never sung

In happy days that knew no cares, no fears,
Those strains whose mystic roll
Is that vibrating thrill of sadness, whence
There breathe across the soul
Those chords of pitying love, the heart's best
influence.

For though thou sangst of hope,
The prophet thou of ages yet to ope,
Which in thy rosy dream
Too near, too soon, too palpable did seem,
Thy song is nowhere glad,
But ever tells the bitter birth it had,
In pains, in scorns, in faults, in wanderings,
In loss, in death, in persecuting stings.

Thy man-befriending view
Saw earth arise in happy vestures new.
The earth men made thee was a sorry dwelling
For a proud spirit swelling

To heights whose majesty no words have power of
telling.

Yet from thy troubles sprang our infinite gain.

Thy troubles passed ; our solid fruits remain.

For every note of thine

Was love-attuned to guide us on our way

Into that age divine

When Peace should shine and wars be swept away ;

When Freedom should throb high in every land ;

When the great mass of men no more should stand

A herd of feeding clay,

Slaves to their despots, slaves to worse than they.

Their sensuous selves,—but all

Grown wiser, purer, nobler, manlier, should

The whole earth fill with one glad brotherhood.

Such was thy sanguine thought,

And such the vision that thy fancies wrought,

For hope swelled high in every verse ; yet there

That hope was child of pain and present care.

For all thy strains we owe

To ruffling breaths that o'er thy soul did blow,

Scattering its brightness forth so that the world might
know.

Australia to England.

A REPLY TO LORD TENNYSON'S "HANDS ALL ROUND."

JOIN our hands! We shall most gladly.

Where thou goest we shall go ;

Distant be the day when sadly

Sinks our sun of empire low.

Still in triumph or in sorrow

All thy fortunes we shall share ;

From thine honoured name we borrow

All the lustre that we bear.

Hand in hand we'll trace the ages,

Stalwart children, mother hale,—

Thou hast bred us,—thou hast made us :

Every fostering care hast paid us,

Now our duty shall not fail.

Hand in hand, we'll face together

Blinding storms or sunny weather.

Thou that greatly lead'st the nations,

Reverenced as the just—the wise !

Thou that, with unselfish patience,

Wip'st the tear from suffering eyes !

Thou the freedom brought'st that blesses,—

Freedom to be kind and true ;

Not the freedom of excesses,

Not the freedom of the few.

Lead thou on, we closely follow,—

Glad to press thy helping hands !

Sweep away the base, the hollow ;

Raise the countless hordes that wallow

Darkly in oppressed lands.

Hand in hand we'll face together
Blinding storm or sunny weather.

Cometh slow but sure the dawning
Of that often sighed-for day,
When all meanness, cringing, fawning
From the earth will pass away.
When all men shall feel as brothers
Conscious of a true man's worth ;
Each respectful of all others,
Not alone of wealth or birth.
Thou hast caused that day to glimmer.
Lead thou on ; we grasp thy hand.
Till it fairly dawn, if grimmer
Aids are claimed where battles shimmer,
By thy side thy sons will stand.
Hand in hand we'll face together,
Blinding storm or sunny weather.

By the Sea.

THERE'S an old fellow, scraggy and gray,
With a carpet-bag swung in his hand,
And off to the pier he is making his way,
With his daughter, along the wet sand.
For a week I have watched them at play
On the beach, or the grass, or the rocks ;
He dressed in his shabby old garments of gray,
She shining in fairy-white frocks.

He has gathered her shells ; he has made
Great castles of sand by the sea ;
He has sat by her shoes when it pleased her to wade :
Like a hen with one chicken was he.

But alas ! for their holiday gone !

Now the steamer is out at the pier.

She whistles ; they hurry aboard ; she moves on :

And their dream is dissolved for the year.

Afar on the glimmering bay

She sinks to a smoke-trailing speck.

Still standing perhaps and still watching are they,

By the rail at the stern of the deck.

Still watching the sun-flooded land,

And those white dots—the houses—recede.

For there will the scenes of their happiness stand

Though they to the multitude speed.

I have wondered what office in lanes

Of the city will see him ere long,

At work till another year turns with its pains,

And its dust, and its toil, and its throng.

And I wonder if sweet it will seem,—

 This week by the sound of the sea ;

Will it flit with the wings of a delicate dream

 In the toils of the weeks that will be?

As in a wide forest—all dark

 And gloomy with awe-brooding shade,

A clear grassy spot in the midst ye may mark

 Where the yellow light flecks the green glade.

And there do the butterflies flit ;—

 There cometh each joy of the woods ;

Even such be this week, such the sunshine of it,

 A glade where no shadow intrudes.

Old heart, art thou mateless? Is this

 The single delight of thy days ?

This bright little maiden thou bendest to kiss,

 In the midst of her exquisite ways.

May your pillow, if lonely it be.

Lie restful wherever ye dwell,

And still through your dreams may the sound of
the sea

Chime in with the voice ye love well.

Australia's Centenary.

FROM out a lowly birth
Have sprung full oft the choicest spirits of earth ;
And many a peasant cot
Hath nursed the infant founts of mighty thought.
So, land of happy homes,
That with high festival hast decked these domes
Thy birth to celebrate !
Though it was humble, and of poor estate,
Yet from the squalor of thine infant years
A youth sublime in promise now appears :
And on the verge doth stand
Of comely manhood and achievement grand.

Joyous the strains that swell
Where now thy happiest of all peoples dwell ;
Thou at whose birth there fell
Only the bitter dew of outcast tears !
Strange that the clank of chains
Should thus have heralded upon thy plains,
An hundred years ago,
The sweetnesses from human arts that flow,—
Yet now the rolling dawn
Tinges with light no spot of earth whereon
Freedom so kindly nestles as with thee.
Dear land of light, of hope, of liberty !
So we, thy sons, thank Heaven, and fondly say,
“For ever blest that natal day,
Though sad, and wet with tears.
It touched the springs of secret-working time,
Which rolled the wheels of fate-fulfilling years,
To bring us of thee in thine opening prime.”

One hundred years are gone !
Another hundred now in radiance dawn,
While Expectation peers
Down the long vista of the rosy years
To follow, through the strenuous times afar,
That glory, shining there like some full star,
Which throbs with light, and inundates the air.
Sound out ye trumpets, roll exultant drums
A greeting to the mightier age that comes
To lift Australia to imperial state !
Oh may it be in fate !
Oh may it be in destiny ! that I
Much of the glories yet may see, that wait,
In those great years which lie
Far in the century whereto the gate
Is this thrice-notable day.
And having somewhat seen, may speed thy way
Into yet fairer times, and so, contented, die.

Good-Night.

DEAREST, press me close.
Print the last kiss warm and deep.
That dear head sheltered near my heart,
And so—to sleep.

Whither do we go
In these watches of the night?
To what far regions do our souls
Take silent flight?

What passes in these hours
So long, so still, we nothing reck,
Nor feel I that warm bosom, nor the arms
Flung round my neck.

When falls the last long sleep,
And life and love alike seem o'er,
Shall we two, clasped in loving strength,
Seek some far shore?

Or,—sprung from wide-spread gloom,
A season blossoming,—like the flowers,
Shall dumb decay at last receive
Those souls of ours?

I know not. Mystery lies
Close to us,—dark,—profound:
While reason with its slender taper lights
A feeble round.

But in that round is light,—
And warmth, and love, and bosoms fond.
Let us forget the doubt that presses near,
The gloom beyond.

Thou dearest art my all ;
And should I lose thee in the gathering night,
I still should bless existence that it brought
Thee to my sight.

The Hyacinth Bulb.

SWEET little May! She had planted a bulb,
And had watered it morning and night,
And patiently waited, and watched it, to see
If the leaflets would burst into sight.

When her illness came, a long month was gone,
But not a green speck in the brown earth shone.

And morning by morning we brought her the news,
To the bed where her pretty face lay,
And we saw her eye sparkle with hope till she read
In our looks what we scarcely could say.

“Not yet!” she would lisp with her sweet little smile,
“But it’s sure to come up,—if you watch it awhile.”

And even the night when the little thing died,
Half waking from slumber, she said,
“You will *promise*, mama dear, to carry me out
Whenever it puts up its head.”
“Ah ! yes, we shall carry you out, my own dear,”
The mother sobbed into her fast-fading ear.

So they carried her out, and they laid her in earth,
And they heaped the clay thick on her breast ;
The fond mother haunted with tears the sweet spot ;
While this comforting hope she caressed :
“We have here laid the bulb in the earth for a while ;
We shall see the flower shining in God’s own smile.”

But, ah ! she had heard and had partly believed
Those doubtings which many have penned,
Who say that our lives are but things of this earth,
And that death is their ultimate end.

“Can it be,” and the whisper struck chill to her
heart,

“That the end of all life and all love is to part?”

For oh! it is hard for our reasons to grasp

What our hopes are so eager to show,

How our souls can be viewless, and yet be ourselves,

And what the land whither they go!

So, night upon night did she wakefully spend

And mournfully mused “What if death were the end?”

Meanwhile we had waited to see the bulb spring;

But our hopes were fast passing away;

When slowly there rose in the earth a green point

Till it entered the brightness of day.

And morning by morning, through sunshine and
shower,

It woke to full glory, a hyacinth flower.

How the mother bent over its beauty, and wept,
But with tears that were half of delight ;
And breathed the rich odour from pendulous bells
Till the twilight stole far into night.
For it whispered of comfort and brightened her eyes,
And lifted her heart to the star-kindled skies !

Is there mortal can tell, how from out the dull earth,
Unscented, unlovely in hue,
There may spring a bright blossom, all fragrant and
sweet,
And nodding with clusters of blue?
And she said, " My own little one taught me to *trust* ;
And I will not believe that her soul's in the dust."

With the Past.

SWEET memories cling around old times and places.
They fade not : they but gather tenderer graces
As the years roll. Here in this sombre wood
Now stand I where long years ago I stood ;
'Tis deep and stilly all. The plashing brook
Pours unknown waters ; where no eye can look
It sings its lonely music ; while some pool
Breaks to the fall of bubbling threadlets cool.
Now here I seat me in the self-same spot
Where then I sat ; the spell that then was wrought
By rustling leaves, and waters, and the flowers,
Still brimmed and shining with the spring-tide showers,
By sweet birds' songs, by the deep loneliness,

I feel again, for in this far recess
All things are now as then. Here is the bank
Whereon I rested ; from yon stone I drank
The limpid waters. Then my slumb'rous ears
Were filled with the same sounds, for passing years
Renew the hum of insects and the sighs
Of forest-stirring breezes ; yea, the cries
Of birds forever at this season will
Make musical the glades they then did fill.
Yet seem they scarce as then. For I am now
No more the same whose gladly-bared brow
The woodland freshness kissed. Altered, I gaze,
And try to think myself as in those days.
It is in vain. The years have been, and fled.
The joys they bore are gone : their balm is shed
A vague regret across the soul is cast,
Haunted by echoes of the ever past.
A secret fragrance over all exhales

Which was not then. For so the mind prevails
Over the senses. These are not merely trees
That rustle ceaselessly like summer seas
Upon a shingly shore : to mine ear they
Are whispering comrades of old times. Those gray
Lichen-clad rocks are not as other stones.
Each well-remembered feature hath its tones
Of sweetened sadness. Winds, and leaves, and falls,
And murmuring eddies, and leaf-hidden calls,
All weave them to this weirdly solemn tune,
“The years are passing, and their end is soon ;”
And Nature whispers, “Lay thy head upon
My verdant lap. That fevered brow, my son,
I’ll gently fan. Why wilt thou longer toil
’Mid struggling men, to win a worthless spoil ?
Why eat thine heart out ? Wouldst thou win a
name ?—

Behold my temple ! it will be the same

A hundred years hence as it seemeth now
Its meanest part as beautiful;—but thou,—
Will thy toil serve to keep thee here as these;
Or will it stay thy passing like this breeze
That flits it knows not whither. Then come, lay
Thyself on this sweet bank, and if thou choose
To lie with me and let thy spirit lose
Itself in long repose, I shall begin
To pour such soft and soothing whispers in
Thy drowsy ears that all thy days shall pass
In sweet forgetfulness of all that was,
Of all that shall be. From the passing hour
Thy dreams shall weave a harbour and a bower
Of sheltered calm. So shall more joy remain
Than aught that can be fought for among men.”

’Tis all too true. And fain, alas, would I,
Thus laid at peace, let the calm hours go by!
Yet forth must fare again, and in the strife

Must toil again. Such is the doom of life.
While this still wood will hum, will ever hum,
When twilight fades, and morning dewdrops come.
Through all the years its little stream will flow,
And sparkle joyously, the soft breeze blow.
When I am far away 'twill still smile on,
As if no heart that loved it well were gone.

A Time-stained Sheet.

FROM A PACKET OF FAMILY LETTERS.

THE hand which traced that flowing scroll
Some eight and fifty years ago,
Moved at the guidance of a soul
Which burned with a pure passion's glow.
That passion long since saw decay :—
For fifty years that hand's been clay !

Yet here in simple manly phrase,
He tells the maiden of his choice,

How her dear image haunts his days,
How in his dreams he hears her voice.
The lovely maid since then grew old,
And years ago was laid in mould.

This stroke and that he ardent traced ;
They read like music to her ear.
When Christmas comes he'll homeward haste,
To marry in the opening year.
And oh, he says, forget not one
Who dreams of you from sun to sun.

His hopes are high ; his coming life
With simple joys is richly bright.
He knows not of the care and strife
Should quench that wakening morn in night.
A few brief years of troubled toil,
That generous heart was common soil.

That gentle maid, with grief opprest,
And years that rarely saw a smile ;
A feeble widow, glad of rest
From human coldness, greed and guile,
Beside a busy street is laid,
Where bustling thousands hourly tread.

FINIS.



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